

The Paint House

Words from an East End Gang

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In memory of Kathy McColgan,
who loved and helped us all.

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Introduction

After leaving the East End of London in the early summer of 1970, Pete was asked by a publisher* to write a book about 'skin-headism' in London. Being flattered by this request, we retreated to a small village in Norfolk and Pete started to scribble. By the end of August, with two thirds of the work done, we loaded up our van, taking all that Pete had written and all the information gathered, and we left for London. The van was broken into in Belsize Park and the unlucky thief ran off with a brief case full of paper. Everything, three months work, was gone.

'Allo, is that the publisher?'

'Yes.'

'This is Pete.'

'Oh good, are you in London? When are you going to let me have that manuscript?'

'Well ... ah ... that was ... a ... what I was phoning you for, you see ...'

'What, you haven't finished it yet? Look, you know we have got to get this out and in the shops by the spring, we have got to get it out before the craze is dead. Well, you have got till the end of September, that's long enough isn't it?'

'Well ... ah ... no ... a ... I've had the bloody thing pinched, the whole lot gone, out of our van in bloody Belsize Park. Not Bethnal Green but in bloody middle-class Belsize Park.'

'Oh ... oh ... no copy anywhere?'

'No.'

'Still you have got all the information?'

'No.'

'Oh ... well you can start again, can't you? Tell you what, get it done by Christmas, and yes, I think we could rush it through and have it on the stalls by the autumn. Yes ... we

*Not Penguin [publisher's note].

might be lucky ... yes, that's it, have it redone by Christmas and then see me. Good-bye.'

Have it done by Christmas indeed. Catch the craze. It was at this point that Pete realized that he had been happily taking part in a conspiracy to exploit our friends. We had been so impressed by it all, how important it was for Pete to be *asked* to write a book. He hadn't seen that he could be persuaded to write it this way or that way, and that a publisher's first priority is profit and that this must have some effect on the book itself.

Never mind about the publishers, weren't we doing the same thing, trying to make a bob or two out of somebody else's life, while making nice liberal arguments about wanting to tell the truth about skinheadism? Whose truth? Our truth. What about the skinhead's truth about skinheadism? We started to think that it would be worth speaking to our friends in Stepney and Bethnal Green who used to be, or still were, skinheads, to see if they were interested in helping put a book together. In the end we decided that we should set up a cooperative of all those involved, to discuss at each stage the material going into the book, to agree over the final product and decide jointly what should be done with any profits that the book might make.

This manuscript is the product of that cooperative action. It was not highly organized, but consisted of informal meetings of groups and individuals talking about their own ideas. All of these meetings were tape recorded and the recordings then typed up. The material was then put into categories and edited. At this stage each section, upon completion, was posted to John and Jim, who read it and passed it on to anyone else who wanted to read it. Then we either met at Dennis's pub or wrote to each other to discuss the various chapters.

There have been several arguments about the content of the book and the way it was written. Alterations have been made as a result of these discussions, when agreement has been reached. We have not been dogmatic in any part of the book, though we have argued for what we thought should go in. A good example of this was when John felt that the swearing and bad language should not go in. We argued that the words used in the quotes were the actual words used, and that therefore it was more honest for the words to be left in; also that they helped to give a

better picture of the characters. John was on his own in this argument, and so the words stayed in.

The book does not attempt to be a sociological work, or a 'professional' study. Anybody who feels like criticizing us on this level can save his energy. Instead, we hope that this is a fair selection of views and opinions, conversations and arguments about the East End, gang life and attitudes, youth clubs, school, work, authority, the law and other areas of importance to this specific gang, the Collinwood. It is said by them and not interpreted by an 'outsider'.

On most issues there is no one opinion or attitude of the gang, but many diverse opinions and even directly contradictory views. We have, no doubt, left out many ideas and beliefs which never came out in the discussions. We, as editors, have tried to solicit as many divergent views as we could. The discussion of the typed material and the letters have helped to stimulate new thoughts and jog memories and, wherever possible, these have been included in the manuscript. There are of course as many different ideas and opinions as there are people involved in the work. Pieces of dialogue have been included to show up these differences and also to keep and demonstrate the flavour of the discussion. We have had difficulty in categorizing and classifying some of the statements and there may be a certain amount of overlap. Where there is repetition from one chapter to another, this has been deliberate, to help the reader see different angles and dimensions of the problems and ideas.

There are remarks made by members of the gang that are great generalizations, such as 'all Pakis carry knives'. We recognize that these are not true but believe that they are relevant in that the person(s) who made this kind of remark, did it in order to make a point or because he (they) believed it to be true at the time. This is also true of some statements of fact made by members of the gang, such as 'Edward Heath went to Eton'. We feel that this does not need correcting as the speaker is trying to put over an idea and not a fact.

It might also appear that some of the dialogue has greater depth, or ideas have been articulated with greater skill than other parts of the dialogue. The reader may question the authenticity of some of the statements, or may think, 'I wonder how much

the editors have altered this sentence or that sentence'. We have not altered the wording or content of any part of the manuscript shown within quotation marks. Why are some parts more fluent, more thought out, why do some statements have more diverse vocabulary, show greater insight and agility with words and ideas? Anything up to sixteen people may have been involved in a discussion on any subject at any one time, each sending off ideas like sparks – igniting someone else's imagination, stimulating greater thought, causing ideas to be developed, clarified. Differences of opinion have become evident and each has developed his argument to persuade others, to make it clear and understandable. The chapter on education is a good example of this, where many ideas were thrown up, and at the end of the chapter the ideas were summed up with precision by one person. Also, some members of the group have greater skill with words in the accepted sense, where others have greater skill in the local vernacular, which loses much of its life, cleverness and sparkle when it is written down. This may be due to our lack of skill in presenting the dialogue, but if some of the dialogue is read aloud by a group with thought about accent and appropriate emphasis, much of the colour will be evident.

The two of us interviewed a small selection of professional people in the Bethnal Green and Stepney area. These included teachers from three of the schools that members of the gang attended: Mr Harvey, headmaster of Morpeth, Mrs McDonald Murdoch, headmistress of Robert Montefiore, Mr Harrington, a teacher at Daneford (Mr Harrington is also a magistrate but not in East London). We also spoke to three youth workers, Rev. Michael Trotter, who runs a Church of England-sponsored youth club in Bow, Mr Derek Cox, a detached youth worker from Avenues Unlimited which is sponsored by the YWCA, and an Inner London Education Authority youth officer, Mr Finch, who is responsible for the Bethnal Green area. We also spoke to the senior probation officer, Mr A. Stuttle of Cambridge Heath Road, and Inspector Ernie Roberts of Arbour Square police station. We spoke to these people to find out their official opinions, firstly with respect to skinheads and the areas of their official concern, such as education or youth work, and secondly on a more generalized level. This is to balance the

gang's attitudes, ideas and beliefs with those people who would have a professional contact with either members of the gang itself or friends of theirs. We have picked out the remarks and statements made by these representatives of the establishment which we believe to be relevant. This is because this book is not trying to represent the official opinions of professional workers in East London but the opinions of the co-authors of this book.

Dennis, the publican who is quoted occasionally in the text, was quoted for several reasons. He was born and has lived all of his life in East London; we feel he is representative in the opinions that he puts forward and therefore what he has to say is relevant; and he has known all the co-authors for some time.

As you will have gathered all of the authors, with the exception of the two of us, were members of a gang called the Collinwood. This was a skinhead gang, in fact one of the first skinhead gangs in England (if not the first). They came together in 1968, a long time before the press even recognized the existence of skinheads. Before you start shouting about how you or someone you know went around with cropped hair and big boots before 1968, we know a lot of people did, but skinheads were the first to stylize the fashion. What was the fashion? Obviously closely cropped hair, but the clothes were distinct and strictly uniform and even had to be worn in a particular way. The boots (cherry red, bover boots) were industrial working boots, very often with steel caps, plain socks, levi denim jeans a size too big around the waist, held up by brightly coloured braces, pulled above the waist and with the trouser legs turned up so as to expose the leg just above the ankle. In this way the size of the boots was accentuated. A tailored shirt with a pleat down the back and a button down collar, usually a Ben Sherman, any cheaper imitation was usually sneered at. The shirts were usually coloured and patterned, never white. The shirt was also worn in a certain way, the top button was always undone and the cuffs of the sleeves turned up just once, a sleeveless pullover was also worn. In the colder weather a 'Crombie' overcoat was worn (black, styled, three-quarter length coat). This was the basic uniform which everyone copied in total conformity. Slowly the style was developed – maybe when the fashion world became aware of the development of a new youth trend. It appears that

conformity went so far as buying clothes, boots, etc. from the same shops. One inexpensive shoe-shop keeper in Cheshire Street, Bethnal Green maintains that skinheads come from all over the country to buy boots in his shop. He showed us a list of the towns that youths said they came from to buy his boots, and the list was quite impressive.

Beyond the uniform, which helped to develop and maintain the cohesiveness of the gang, there was no major activity in the form of motor bikes, scooters, the following of a specific fashion world or music. 'Reggae' was important for only a few months in 1969, but it was soon rejected as it was 'West Indian music'. The prime function seems to have been a search for 'action' and excitement.

It was while searching for action that the gang first came to the 'Paint House'. This was our first meeting place. The Paint House, at that time known as the Cellar Club, was a decaying Victorian building which had at one time been one of the many community centres, missions and settlement houses which existed all over the East End of London. The Cellar Club had just opened and it was hoped that the local youths would take over and run the centre for themselves, supplying their own activities, as well as activities for the younger children. We had decided that we would act as advisers and offer practical skills where possible and encourage those who came to the centre to deal with any administration that they considered necessary.

It was through these young people that the reputation of the Collinwood became known to us, we seemed to know many of the characters of the mob before we saw them ... Dave, for his humour and escapades in school, Bill for his enormous size and generosity, John for his loyalty and determination, Gary 'the professor' (because he was doing 'O'-levels), and his mate Alex who worked at the brewery, and Steve who made up the trio. Tommy, Ted, Holly, Smally, Paul, Pricey, Timmy, Jim, Guinane, Jamie and Alan were names often referred to as central members of the gang. The atmosphere in the centre began to become tense, especially after a 'rumble' between a couple of local secondary schools in which the Collinwood was involved.

A few of the Collinwood visited the club, and after this there was hysterical chatter about invasions from the Collinwood and

that they would come with guns and knives and take the club apart. Then one Wednesday only two people arrived at the club and, full of expectancy, we waited in the silent building with part trepidation and part curiosity for the 'invaders'. Vans screeched to a halt at the door, a sudden rush of unknown faces took over the building; within seconds they were all over the club, in and out of every room. We were ignored, as if we were part of the decoration. On finding that their 'prey' had flown, their attention was immediately turned to the furniture, chairs, tables, anything movable or anything normally stationary that could be encouraged to be movable. A full size snooker table found itself in a vertical position, leaving its legs for the first time in decades. This outburst of energy suddenly calmed and we persuaded them to struggle to get the snooker table back into its accustomed position, but then the crash of fifty windows echoed in our ears as one by one the shattered panes cascaded around us. Fired by this renewed activity the mob dropped the snooker table and redirected its energies to any remaining furnishings, suddenly rushed from the building and were gone.

We had met the Collinwood, perhaps never to meet again. But no, the Collinwood was curious, they returned and stayed. At first just to sit around smoking, chatting, talking about the last exploit or the fight to come - in a bored way ripping the stuffing out of the remaining armchairs or chipping a knife at the woodwork. Taking the piss out of us for a laugh, just for amusement, or pushing us as far as they could to watch our reactions - sitting late into the night singing football songs or chants. The building decayed at a faster rate than it was used to. Slowly the mob saw the building as theirs and felt more secure and they began doing things to make it a little more comfortable.

Paint was acquired, ladders borrowed and brushes purchased and the building became a hive of activity and paint-splattered jeans became a sign of membership to the Collinwood. The building was christened the Paint House. Evenings were ended with fish-and-chips suppers washed down with beer. Derelict buildings were raided for furniture, light fittings and anything useful, with the knowledge of the demolition companies.

Every wall had a new covering of paint, windows were replaced and so the building gradually became usable again. There

were very few furnishings left – chairs, tables, crockery and cupboards were scarce. The original furnishings had been removed by the Council by the lorry load, in their mangled and often unrecognizable condition. We also managed to shift vast quantities of rubbish which had accumulated over seventy years. The next major task was to find replacements. A salvager in Bermondsey solved our problem. For the sum of five pounds he allowed us to clear what surely to him must have been junk but to us were the essentials of our hopefully luxurious environment at the Paint House. All day we shuttled to and fro across the river moving lorry loads of chairs, tables, beds, chests of crockery, wardrobes and hat stands, a grandfather clock, mirrors and cabinets, chests of drawers, buckets and mops and brooms, carpets and rugs. The Paint House looked a strange sight filled from one end to another with furniture and bric-a-brac, which certainly didn't look comfortable in its new environment. The lads started to sort out the new property as to what was worth keeping and what should go to the dustmen. The junk allocated for the dustmen was quite considerable, at least half a lorry full, and it was decided to break this up by heaving it over the banisters and letting it fall to the basement where it would be stored until the dustmen came. It was in the activity of heaving and smashing and crashing that the lads got carried away and they were not satisfied until every scrap of furniture had gone the same way. The heap was so high that its uppermost chair was higher than the banister from which it was thrown. The pile completely blocked the entrance hall, so that exit or entry to the building by the door was totally impossible. Even the collection of crockery which had been highly prized by some lads hoping to open a canteen, lay in shattered pieces all around the hall. After several hours of clearing and re-sorting through the heap, there remained only a small collection of usable chairs and tables and at least three lorry loads of splintered wood.

That night when all the members of the Paint House had gathered and members who had been at work all day saw the collection of rubbish, the results of a hard day's work and source of great enjoyment to the wreckers, all were called to a reckoning. This reckoning resulted in three of the gang, who had so wantonly smashed the crockery, being fined ten shillings

each and banned from the building until they paid. One paid within the week, the second wasn't seen in the building for three weeks when he paid on his return, the third never returned. The decision on the fines and the enforcement of it was implemented by the members of the club. This was the first effort at social control in the building by the members, and from this point on the anti-social behaviour and vandalism of property valued by the members was controlled by group pressure. Up to this point the anti-social behaviour of one person or a group of people had not been seen as the responsibility of the overall group.

During and after the decorating of the Paint House, other activities had been organized as and when members felt so inclined. They organized coach trips to away football matches. Supporters of Spurs who lived outside of London slept at the Paint House, when Spurs played at home. There were several efforts made by both ourselves and individual members of the club, to get a committee set up to make decisions about organizations, materials and funds. All of these failed, mostly due to the rejection of any leadership or authority. Therefore most activities were spontaneous; a suggestion would be thrown up and this would either be accepted or rejected by the majority. Or an individual would have an idea and would tout around for support and help to get it under way. Of course, throughout this period there was the odd chair dismantled, a tin of paint may now and again have been thrown through the window to decorate the street below. But this kind of incident diminished as people turned their attention to other activities.

During the dustmen's strike the warm weather had helped the rotting rubbish in the basement to stink worse than ever and any activity in the building was almost impossible without a gas mask. So a group of the lads found a couple of market barrows parked nearby, loaded these up with rubbish and set off for the town hall to 'make a demonstration on behalf of the dustmen's pay claim'. On the way, houses were hawked for their rubbish to help fill up the carts, and some of the rubbish filling the streets was dumped on as well. Then the whole load was dumped by the door of the Town Hall to shoutings of 'WE'RE THE SKINHEADS AND WE'RE DOING

THIS FOR THE DUSTMEN.' The *Daily Mirror* was phoned and told of the skinheads' support for the dustmen and of their Town Hall dumping. Much to their chagrin this was reported the next day as being 'a group of housewives and market porters'.

When the London Street Commune, a hippy commune which came into being in the summer of 1969 and squatted in empty properties, moved to Whitechapel, the Paint House decided to visit them. Even though there was no love lost for the hippies, the gang wasn't going there to start a fight – they were curious about the hippies' ideas and wanted to meet their leader, Dr John. This meeting was followed up by two visits of members of the Commune to the Paint House.

The beginning of the end of the Paint House came when the ceiling in the lower hall collapsed. This hall was the main games room and had just been done up to be used as a discotheque. The hall was no longer safe and had to be closed off. It was just a matter of months before the Paint House closed completely in June 1970. It was the latter period of the Paint House that we see as perhaps the most important. It was during this period that discussions became the main form of activity. These discussions covered nearly all the topics discussed in this book, especially the self-analysis, the structure of society, self-organization and youth cooperatives. Politics was a major topic, in particular current political issues and leaders. The atmosphere was calm and unlike the viciousness and 'aggro' of the first few months.

The gang was totally male: even at the Paint House where girls took part in the activities they were still excluded from the gang activities. Members of the gang who started courting usually dropped out of all or some gang activities, and when the relationship with the girl ended he would then usually return to the male company. The gang was also a racially-mixed gang, including West Indians, mixed nationalities (West Indian and English), Jewish, Irish and English. It was only when the gang began to break up that the social mixing of black and white began to decrease.

Pete and Susie
March 1972

1 The Community

'We come from Stepney, it's a good area ... why? I suppose because you was born there. Let's face it Stepney's no different from Bethnal Green or any part of the East End. You can't ... you don't describe it – if they ain't 'eard of it you think they're cunts, doncha?'

'The East End was always a poor area. It's a typical Labour borough ain't it – working class.'

Most East Londoners are very aware of the deprivation of their recent history, and the image which the area tends to retain. Dennis, a publican, says, 'I think that people still got this impression that East London is children running about with no shoes on, that parents go out and get drunk every night, and all that. "Well, what do you expect from them dockers in the pub every night ..." and they're not, they're at home in front of their televisions.'

The physical environment of the East End has seen many drastic changes in the past hundred years. Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1881) tells us that lodging houses were common in the nineteenth century for the working people to live in, with scarcely any difference from the lodging houses used by tramps. These were especially common in Whitechapel, Keats Street, Cable Street, Flower and Dean Street, Petticoat Lane and Spitalfields. Flat development in the East End was instigated by a philanthropist, Miss Coutts, on the advice of Charles Dickens, with the building of Columbia Square and Columbia Market. The idea was quickly implemented by other building trusts, such as Peabody Trust (this trust was well known for its gloomy buildings and its favourable financial balance). Alongside these big industrial dwellings grew many streets of small terraced houses. The then three boroughs of Stepney, Bethnal Green and Poplar had become

the catchment area for the labour force of London in the nineteenth century. This area reached a peak of population in 1899 of 598,000 people, the area covering just under eight square miles. It was during this period that the dockyards, shipbuilding, brewery, furniture and cabinet-making industries developed and the markets became of great importance to the city. With the exception of ship building these industries still serve an important function in the community.

The churches developed missions in the area, similar to the ones they had throughout the Empire, hoping to relieve the 'spiritual and material poverty' of this over-populated area.

In 1931 the population was still as high as 491,000 but with the war, evacuation and destruction of thousands of homes and post-war redevelopment plans, the population by mid-1970 was down to 182,000 (estimated).² By now the industrial dwellings and cobble-stone streets have given way to enormous housing estates (63 per cent of all housing is owned by Tower Hamlets and the GLC). In *Family and Kinship in East London*, by Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, they discuss the cohesiveness of the Bethnal Green community in the 1950s and the important role this should play in future development.

ties of kinship and friendship which connect the *people* of one household to the *people* of another. In such a district community spirit does not have to be fostered, it is already there. If the authorities regard that spirit as a social asset worth preserving, they will not uproot more people, but build the new houses around the social groups to which they already belong.³

The majority of the housing in Tower Hamlets (consisting of the old boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney) has been done by the GLC. They control over 24,000 tenancies in the borough and have housed many thousands of Tower Hamlets residents outside of the borough. Tower Hamlets itself controls only 14,000 tenancies in the borough.⁴ It appears that the GLC housing policy doesn't seem to take into account the

1. Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health and Principal School Medical Officer, Tower Hamlets London Borough, 1969.

2. *ibid.*

3. *Family and Kinship in East London*, Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, Penguin, 1957, pp. 198-9.

4. Tower Hamlets Official Guide, page 21.

family and social ties. Dennis's experience is fairly common.

The particular block of flats that I lived in in Stepney, Ring House, were a complete transfusion of people from a street called Twain Court. So what you had was the same quality of life in Ring House as you 'ad in Twain Court, except that now people live side by side and over and under each other. Everyone knew everyone else intimately. Flats are not like that now, flats are not what I remember Ring House being, 'cause they draw people from all over. They don't take a street full of people, who have sort of seen each other and 'elped each other and fought each other, and sort of lived life together. They don't take that lot and say bang you lot are gonno live in 'ere. That particular good thing is missed in blocks of flats, because they 'ave taken a person from 'Ackney and another one from Woolwich and so on. The flats I was thinking about are borough, which are a bit different to these, they're GLC.

It is also very important from what the members of the Col-linwood gang said that they belong to a one-class community.

'You don't get no fucking toffs 'round 'ere, middle-class people. If you go 'round Hyde Park and all that, firstly you think that's where all the stars come from ... i'n't it? If there's toffs 'round Stepney you'd notice 'em but if 'e's 'round other areas like Chelsea you don't notice 'im, do ya?'

This belief that it is a one-class area is substantiated by the 1961 census which shows only five per cent of the population is classified professionally as middle class. The one-classness of the area has been perpetuated by the housing policy and has helped to maintain the identity of the East Londoner, as is pointed out by Dennis. 'In the main, living accommodation 'as always been in the Peabody Trust or the local borough, no private houses. Ya know what I mean, terraced houses that belong to a trust company. Property wasn't for sale. I suppose that over the years this is what has kept the middle class, or I suppose anybody, out, that really likes to buy a house. I know that this 'as changed now that the terraced houses have gradually been put up for sale one at a time ... anyway the GLC is now buying them all back and knocking 'em down and building flats, which again you can't buy, you 'ave to become a GLC tenant. That's what I think keeps the area.'

In contrast to the people's desire that the community should

remain one class we find other people, who are representative of the middle class, believe in more integration. The Rev. Michael Trotter, Youth Leader in Bow, states that 'a youth worker or a social worker just can't get anyplace to live. I think any social worker would surely be in favour of a mixed community, an ideal community surely is one that is mixed, one that has a fair proportion of different categories of people. You don't want all millionaires but at the same time you don't want all dustmen – wonderful though dustmen are.'

The Tower Hamlets Borough Council is currently involved in a 'mixed development' in the St Katherine's Dock area, which is seen as an opportunity for creating a new image for Tower Hamlets. This scheme, costing twenty-two million pounds, will have 700 houses for a population of 2,000. There will be three schools, playgrounds, sports centre and squash courts, swimming pool and gymnasium, vast entertainment centre, theatres and sound and television studios linked to a floating restaurant in the river. Dennis sees this as something out of place. 'I still call it (St Katherine's) the East End ... what these people intend to do with it will make it an anomaly. It will be like West Berlin, mate. It will be something that's not right and the people that live there ain't gonna feel right about it either, I don't think!'

The suggestion of middle-class people moving into the East End itself is seen as an infringement on the 'working-class territory' by members of the Collinwood, as a threat to their identity. They have already felt the effects of the GLC housing policy, as was foreseen by Wilmott and Young.

'There used to be a strong community in the East End but not so much anymore, 'cause they're all moving outside and nobody knows anyone ... there's not really many true East Enders, born here, left in the East End ...'

'We lived in a slum didn't we, an Alf Garnett house with a toilet in the back yard and all that, 'cause me mum and dad they couldn't get a place, they had to wait on the 'ousing list and move out to Dagenham, which was known as out in the country, out in the sticks.'

'That's what happened to my old man and my old girl. They

lived in Shipman 'ouse 'round the island, round near the docks, where all that was bombed out during the war ... they had all these fucking bugs crawling up their sleeves and then they was moved to Dagenham ... my dad moved back cause I 'spose it was nearer to his work and his mates are 'ere. 'E's a docker and he knows people 'ere and 'e likes it 'ere. My mother moved 'ere to keep me brother out of trouble ... when 'e was seven and I was eight, he was fucking thieving and breaking things ...'

The members of the Collinwood had very mixed feelings about the estates on which they lived.

'Nearly everyone come from flats, estates built after the war. The majority had lived in other properties before.'

'You meet more people, you get used to 'em, like when you're little and you move into a new house, it's good isn't it?'

'On new estates more and more young families, more people your own age, are always moving in.'

'Well, someone in my building grassed up that we 'ad a dog and we 'ad to get rid of it.'

'I don't speak to people or know people on our estate. All we know is the woman downstairs, 'cause we got a nigger on either side.'

'Our place is built round, it's only two floors with a balcony and you 'ave to say 'ello to everyone as you go out.'

'You just feel like lodgers there.'

Rather than a community spirit, the Collinwood gang tends to have an affinity with an image of the East Enders, as being tough, humorous and a subculture of their own.

'Most people in the East End want to be different from everyone else in the country.'

'The East End don't differ from areas in Glasgow, Manchester and all that. Any big city has a slum-area thing. It's all the same 'cept the Krays don't get in, this is nearer the West End, that's all.'

'People think that cause you're from the East End, you're harder than other people that come from outside the East End. Years ago, my dad told me, the East End was ten times more violent than it is now; they used to jump coppers, cut 'em up and everything, although coppers were 'arder in them days.'

Coppers could take their coats off and take on three blokes, he reckons, in 'em days.'

'It's a good place to live but for the blacks.'

'Very friendly ... not many places to go. What used to be good about it was all the Paki bashing.'

'There's always people about ... beautiful Brick Lane is where all the Pakis live. Bethnal Green is about the most 'class' area; very few slums left there, very few coloured people. Let's face it, immigrants do make the place slummy 'cause in their countries they don't live the same as us, they eat different food and everything and it must smell, and they do different things like the way they put their rubbish out and all that. Same as like the Italian areas, and the Polish area, all the same.'

'Then you've got the old meths and all that.'

'Spitalfields is really terrible cause of all the rubbish from the market and there's all the rats and everything there.'

The gang sees itself as a natural continuation of the working-class tradition of the area, with the same attitudes and behaviour as their parents and grandparents before them. They believe they have the same stereotyped prejudices against immigrants and aliens as they believe their parents have and had, but they play these roles outside of the context of the community experienced by their parents, etc.

'When people keep saying skinheads, when they're talking about the story of us coming up from the East End, this has happened for generations before, past, past, past ... I mean where does "skinhead" come into it?'

Street Gang

Everywhere they are waiting. In silence.
In boredom. Staring into space.
Reflecting on nothing, or on violence
That is long since past. Wondering.
Wondering what will happen next.
Whatever it is is beyond their control
Or understanding. They are waiting. Not vexed
By any thoughts of the uncertain future
(Apparently) absorbed in the present
Shot through with spasms of the violent
Past. They are waiting. ...

Coffee-cups

Battle. Matches flare. Cigarettes
Glow in the darkness of the milk-bar
Or the drug-store. Hour after hour
They sit, indistinguishable
In the darkness: oblivious of who they are
Or what they want: except to be together.
Then suddenly it happens. A motor-cycle
Explodes outside, a cup smashes,
They are on their feet, identified
At last as living creatures,
The universal silence is shattered,
The law is overthrown, chaos
Has come again. ...

The victim has been kicked,
Gouged, stamped on, crucified.

His blood streams across the pavement.
And none of them knows why.
Tomorrow their endless vigil
Will begin again. Perhaps nothing will happen.
Or perhaps this time, a single
Scapegoat will not suffice. ...

Harry Webster

2 The Gang

'I used to hang around the Collinwood and that with me brother and Pricey and then Ted, and then Bob came cause I took 'im from school, ya know like ... and then a load of different peoples come and go. I mean like if you went round the Collinwood, there's all different peoples there ... went there just to sit around ... we was only fifteen, we ain't got no pubs or nothing ... didn't like clubs.'

'It was a centre weren't it; it was big flats and all that. I don't know how ... it just started out of a couple of us going there 'cause some of us lived pretty near there ... then others started coming over. Only Alan lived on the Collinwood, they all lived around it. Well who goes outside their front door; if you're gonna make trouble ya don't make trouble outside your front door and break your windows and break the people downstairs' to get a complaint about it ... you'd go over there, you'd go over there where there's no one knowing you ... around the Collinwood there was about twenty on average but with bovver there was sometimes more than that ... mucking about on the grass and playing football under the light of the pub, about a dozen of us just standing there, just kicking a football all night ...'

A local secondary modern school teacher, Mr Harrington, recalls the beginnings of skinheadism in the East End. 'What we saw was the Collinwood, that's where it started, there is no question about it. That's where the phenomena was and about three years ago it was obvious to anyone who worked here in the evening that there was a veritable reign of terror on the part of a sort of Sartre mentality. You always find this sort of thing among thirteen or fourteen year olds, that's where it started. You don't have to be two years at LSE or one at Sussex University to know that there was something wrong. This again

stemmed from the appalling deterioration of the estates and the attempt to impose barracks without good policing and order and that's where it started. It was obvious that there was a certain amount of unease and tension there.'

'This was the turning point of everyone's lives, it was sort of a new craze to be violent. Football had a lot to do with it. Everyone was at school, even if they were sixteen they had stayed on.'

'As soon as Bob came round he wanted to make 'imself look 'ard or something and when 'e 'eard about all them 'ard lots like, all them older kids and Farris, they all used to 'ave their 'eads shaved, didn't they? And they used to stripe (cut with razor) people and that ... Bob wanted to make 'imself look 'arder like them so he 'ad 'is 'air cut short like them.'

'All of the 'ard cases of our time went to the Collinwood, about a 'undred of 'em, of which we were the kids, we were the punks, we were the boys ... we were the boys who thought we were big boys. It was a good place for the summer; there was a big wall we could sit on and it was near to everybody's 'ouse like, it just caught on. Then it became "the place", if you wanted to be 'ard then you would go there, everybody knew somebody. ... Skinheads were the big thing ... we was the 'ardest of our time, people with long 'air was cowards, you 'ad to be a bit of a Rick and Dick (thick). Now, well you get a cunt of about thirteen or fourteen, 'as 'is Cromby, white Stapress, royals, Ben Sherman and braces, and the three-button black shirt and white tie. Cunts. The excitement, there was loads, each day brought a turning point in the Collinwood.'

'Well, the first time me and Alex went round there, there was a big dust-up about a big fight or something. We thought there was a fight because a bottle had been smashed. We see 'em and we thought there was a fight and the police came round and it ended up that they was both messing about. That's the way they messes about with bottles and things. They was nut cases. You had to support the teams, Tottenham and Millwall. ... That was when Dave was just starting up on 'is great career as a comedian. 'E used to walk about ... "who the 'am spam do you think you am, you think you're body everyself, pick on somebody your own long enough, if you get the opportunity

rub off" ... 'e was just coming to the height of 'is popularity, 'e used to be singing every night 'round the Collinwood.'

'All the geezers was at school. They went to Stepney Green, Morpeth, John Cass and Robert Mont. The summer of '68 was the height 'cause after that everyone just went to pot. Well, the older boys was getting bigger boys then, going out in their old suits, leave at 'ome their bereaved bovver boots. It was just us 'eavy mob, or light mob (to them light mob, to us 'eavy mob and to the kiddies who were down below us, who would sprout in the years to come as young Collinwoodites). Then we was just the boys, cause everyone 'ad 'eard of the Collinwood, 'cause when we used to go round we used to go round to beat up other gangs. It was mainly inter-gang fighting, which would be the big talking point of the Collinwood for about three weeks 'til something else 'appened, ya know what I mean, 'til someone got nicked. Even the law used to say, "come on son don't shit on your own doorstep, move out of this territory, will ya". Do ya remember? Now they fucking nick ya.'

Mr Harrington continued to say that 'This was a phenomenon which you always get in working-class communities, especially amongst the deprived, a sense of wanting to commit violence.'

To the gang the Collinwood was merely their meeting place and they seemed unaware of any people living on the estate. It was simply due to the architectural design, which gave them a place to sit, a place to kick the football and a place to get out of the rain, that they came to this estate. There seems to have been only one incident of confrontation with the people of the estate.

'At first they (residents of the estate) just used to moan about the noise but then Sulliman and some of them came round and they didn't like it. They didn't like black people hanging around and so they started making complaints about these coloured boys doing all this and all that. Then one of them porters round there got stabbed in the eye by a coloured bloke, Marina, 'e stabbed 'im. He (Marina) came round and 'e sort of knew a few of us and we all said "look at 'im, all flash and that" but 'e came round with all 'is niggers and 'e stabbed a porter one night, it was only a penknife but it went in. Then all the porters joined

up and came out with clubs and all them things and we 'ad to leave - they were coming after us. When we went back they didn't see any black men so ...'

After the gang had been using the estate for some months the local Tenants' Association opened up a youth club in the tenants' club building.

'The club wasn't opened at first, it opened after a while. She (Sophie) was all right, ya know what I mean. Whereas we'd go down to Morpeth and break all the windows, we wouldn't touch 'er club ... she was like your mum, if ya did something bad she didn't say nothing about violence but she used to say that you could come in out of the cold and we used to play on the pin-ball machines and all that and we usually got fed up but when ya got fed up, you'd just walk out and all that. She used to say, "oy, don't do that Tommy or else I'll tell your mummy about you, wait 'til I see your mum." She lived on the estate.'

'At weekends we used to go up to football and go down the stations after the game.'

'Member we went down to Euston and all that, jumping on people and that. Then on a Sunday we'd go up Chingford and set the forest on fire.'

'Yeah, we used to set all the forest alight, then run away.'

'It was all in flames, all the people came out ... "who done that, son?" they wouldn't think kids 'ad done it, ya know what I mean? ... "did you see who done that, son?" as we were running out of the forest, "I dunno ..." and Pricey "some man up there, we seen 'im walking along ..."'

'Biggest laugh, loads of things really ... there was so many things 'appening. We used to do things like go to Southend and stay the night and 'cause you stays around with friends a lot there's always things that 'appen that make you laugh, and all that. You go to a hot-dog stall and someone nicks one and then the geezer comes out after you, it just all 'appened. Even the Hyde Park lot just started on a day out, ya know what I mean like, it just started like that.'

'We was round the Collinwood, right? It was in the summer. As we said we used to go out a lot then, didn't we? Normally Vicky Park, but we decided for a party so we went to Hyde Park. So we are going over there like, we skip the fare and that, so we

run out at the other end, didn't we? There was a load of Pakis, now you remember that Paki. He was walking along and someone pushed 'im against the window. 'E bounced off. As we walked by everyone was pushing 'im against the window, and 'e was bouncing off, wasn't 'e? They never 'urt 'im or nothing.'

'When we got to the Park we just went wild.'

'There was some Paki taking a picture of 'is wife and little kids and you went in and put your fingers in the way, like that. We thought that 'e might 'ave your finger prints.'

'Then the water attracted us.'

'So we went to the lake, we was just walking around, wa'n't we? Throwing stones at the ducks. Then we come to the cafe.'

'There was people in the boats and somebody suggested throwing stones and splashing 'em from off the bridge. So we said "Yer, all right, you go on the bridge and get some stones and we will go in the cafe and get some food." So we was in the cafe we was all queueing up, they was sticking stuff up their jumpers, didn't pay for nuffin. So we ran out and John comes over and said "Bob's killed someone" so we says "Arr. Piss off."

'What 'ad 'appened right, we all got in the cafe, some 'ad walked on and started fucking about on the bridge. Me and Stan 'ad got our 'am rolls and what ever we wanted and run up on the bridge. As we got there we see all them standing about, fuckin' about, and 'e 'ad this brick in a sort of a trilby. That was the fashion at the time. So 'e 'as threw it, ain't 'e? 'E 'it the Paki on the 'ead. 'E 'as gone in, ain't he (the Paki)? 'E 'as gone over one side, 'e's dropped 'is paper in, and 'e 'as gradually rolled, rolled over that side. Then two blokes dived in, off the bridge. I come running back and says "Bob's killed someone."

'I see 'em running down the road. They was all laughing, well laughing, but they was running hard. 'E says "come and 'ave a look". So we went round one side.'

'We was pointing at it and laughing sort of, want we? 'Cause it was unbelievable, almost.'

'All the traffic stopped, and people was diving in, and they 'ad got a motor boat out. Someone come up and signalled that they ain't found nothing. That's when they started pointing at us and saying "There they are". So we 'ave sort of 'alf walked, 'alf run away.'

'We was laughing and making jokes about it.'

'We went to Knightsbridge Station. We met the others at the next station. They was laughing about it. Then someone told someone that they couldn't be trusted.'

'We all swore we wouldn't tell anybody about it. But I think that everyone did tell someone.'

'I remember when they came round for me though, this was six weeks later. I thought it was years but it was six weeks, it really seemed like a long time. I was in me bed, it was eleven in the morning. There was a knock at the door, I thought it was John come round for me to go to football. Me dad answered the door and they said "Hyde Park Police, is your son there?" I shit a brick and turned over and made out I was asleep. Me ol' man come in and said "What you fucking been doing over Hyde Park?" "I ain't been over there, the last time I went over there was when I went fishing." "Well, the police want you. Get up." So I get up and see 'em. They said "Do you mind if we take 'im down to the station?" They took some of me jeans and boots and that. They took me down Harbour Square.'

'I was really shitting myself, I was shaking you know. They said "We have got a bloke from Hyde Park CID to talk to you." "Do you want to talk about it?" "I don't know anything about it." So they put me in a cell. The door was open and there was police all round. I was in there for hours just sitting there.'

'Then I 'eard Bob and Ted. They was talking to each other. They was laughing and joking. Well, I thought, it can't be that bad if they were joking about it, and so I started. So anyway they took me in a room again and said "Well we've got statements from so and so, and so and so, we know who done it. Are you going to give your story?" So I said "I don't know nothing about it, I wasn't there." "We know you was there we have witnesses." So they showed me the statements. I gave them a statement and tried to avoid what happened as much as possible. Anyway they took me 'ome like and told me dad about it and 'e said to me "Why didn't you tell me about it, I wouldn't 'ave told 'em nothing?" I said, "Well you just can't tell people about it."

'Smithy came round, he was shit scared, because they ain't got 'im yet. 'E went 'ome and they came round for 'im about four

times. 'E was in but 'e 'as got one of them little spy holes. Looked through that, and then went back and 'ide under the bed.'

'One Saturday afternoon, Spurs was playing Newcastle, me and Pricey and a mate went round to play football at the Collinwood. Two hefty looking blokes 'ave walked up and 'ave said to Pricey "Murphey?" Naturally, 'e took no notice whatsoever, and this bloke grabbed 'old of 'im and said, "Murphey, let's 'ave a look at your teeth." Pricey 'as got a gold one, Murphey 'as got a silver one. So, they took 'im up to Spud's 'ouse and Spud's old man 'as said, "No, that ain't my son." Then I tumble what it was all about. I've gone 'ome and 'me dad says, "The cops 'ave been and they are coming for you." We got pulled in, we was one of the last to get pulled. Nothing happened to me, I was all right, I just kept denying that I was on the bridge.'

'Even the Hyde Park lot just started on a day out, ya know what I mean like, it just happened like that.'

'We used to do all sorts of stupid things ... go to Vicky Park and hire a boat out or tell a kid to give us a lift. Or all 'ide behind the bushes and one come out and say "give me a lift, mate" and when the kid come along all jump in 'is boat and sink it to the bottom. We used to do the same with the girls and they would lose their shoes in the mud in the bottom ... some bloke went mad when he was down there, some Irish bloke 'e was ... 'e came out of the bushes with a club, mad-like ... I thought it was wood but it was only plastic like and 'e came rushing after us but he couldn't catch none of us ... *we just ran away from them all.*'

'Ya wouldn't 'alf feel a fool to be put up against the wall (by the police) and taking your boot laces away, you'd feel a right cunt ... they said it to us, we said get out of it and walked away. My brother came out of the station, 'e seen 'em all 'aving their laces took, I see 'im walking down the road no laces and 'e went down 'is trousers and pulled 'em out, pulled out the laces. ... What were they doing with the braces? When the coppers nicked 'em. ... "When they run they will 'ave to 'old their trousers up" they (the police) thought ... the braces don't 'old their trousers up, they wear them for show. It was to stop 'em running and fighting but it turned out it made 'em look silly ... it didn't do very much - they just tied 'em up with string. The

police were doing it to protect the people at the stands at the fair but the people at the stands was flogging them string.'

All of the mob's activities were initially spontaneous and harmless but a more sinister aspect often developed. A probation officer working in the East End pinpointed one of the problems of gang life. 'The skinheads are making efforts to become socialized, this is happening in the gang but should have happened in the family. The primary group for youngsters should be the family but for many of these youngsters the gang is the primary. This causes many problems because kids must appreciate the culture patterns of authority. In the family the kid can play out an anti-authority role with little harm but when this normal process is played out inside a gang structure, inevitably there will be trouble which the kids will be most hurt by.' In some ways the gang's descriptions of their activities appears to enforce this opinion.

'Everyone's there, say there's gonna be a fight somewhere, everyone's there, any parties ... ya know what I mean. It's a community, a gang, isn't it, it's only another word for community, kids, thugs or whatever ...'

'It was Paki-bashing but not like it is now just beating up Pakis, it was for the money, them kids used to do it for the money. Them older blokes and we used to go with 'em ... then we went out on our own, we didn't take their money, just used to 'it 'em. Used to try and get money but depends on who went. Ted, although 'e always got plenty of money, 'e would always want the money, don't know why.'

'Ted just liked to know that he was getting something, 'im and them two others rolled that Paki and got sixty quid, didn't they? They used to do it together, like say three or four of ours was 'itting 'im and the others would go down 'is pockets and get the money like and then nip away with the money.'

A friend of theirs, who was not a member of the gang, said he didn't join the gang because 'I thought they was just nuts, used to see people going down the road and used to jump 'em for nothing.'

'We only 'it people for reasons, didn't we? ... like if they looked at us. Do you know anyone who got beat up for nothing? You're just one of the mob going to look for fights every other

night ... you couldn't just walk around by yourself and beat up Pakis, you wouldn't 'alf get a beating if you went round on your own doing things you would have done with the mob. Don't say you would 'ave run around Brick Lane punching Pakis on your jack.'

'Fighting's the main thing, skinheads had no interest; when it was Mods, it was all clothes and fashion, when it was rockers, it was all motorbikes, with skinheads it is fighting. Well, they 'ave a bit of their own fashion, it ain't all that, apart from wearing big boots and that. Other kids who weren't skinheads, we just used to punch fuck out of 'em, didn't we? ... we used to say "fairy", didn't we, 'member? We used to chase the other kids out of the clubs. I suppose you just liked a lot of action then, didn't ya, that's all you went in for, action ...'

It is interesting to note that for these youths and the gang as a whole there were no constructive opportunities supplied by the community which were relevant to them. Opportunities which would have enabled them to have legitimate outlets for 'action'. Mr Harrington describes an incident of skinhead violence. 'Two long-haired people were beaten up in the park and it wasn't all that serious ... as a point of fact many members of the mob were quite innocent people and were just carried away by two very malevolent individuals.' This idea is not endorsed by the mob but rather that individuals feel important and gain status by being involved and at the same time believe they are following the mob ('everyone') and not instigating.

'You can 'ave a laugh with a mob, can't ya? I wouldn't go with a mob now. Before when I used to run along the street I think to myself "great" and all those people standing there looking at *me* ... running along and shouting and that ... you just used to follow everyone, I just followed them, I never did nothing on me own and nothing like that ... I just followed them and run along with 'em.'

'When you're walking through a town singing, like at South-end, like they used to, you get the kids at the front, they want to be seen by people, walking along all flash. They all want to fight when they're with the mob.'

'Yeah, they all want to fight when they're in the mob, it's like the pack qualities in the wolf. A wolf on its own will only

attack smaller creatures. Once skinheads get together they think they're tough, they would attack something, anything, in the pack.'

'It's like a copper, you get some kids jumping on coppers but they wouldn't do it on their own.'

'It's like with Pakis, most people wouldn't do it on their own, everyone knows that a Paki carries a knife 'round with 'im all the time, everyone does, even before skinheads came out. 'E challenged one once and the Paki pulled out a fucking big knife, didn't 'e? Pakis were getting rolled before skinheads came out, it's just that skinheadism 'eightedened it.'

Most people believe as Mr Harrington, that there are some specific leaders within the gang itself. However, the gang members don't see this as being the case.

'Leaders ... not any really, never really thought about it.' Some members rejected the idea of leadership more strongly, envisioning leaders in some sort of position of authority over them.

'If he said "go and get that geezer" people wouldn't do as 'e said. I fucking wouldn't do it and there ain't no one who would do it, I don't think.'

'A leader couldn't tell people what to do, they wouldn't listen to 'im. If 'e beat people up for not doing what he said, they would all jump 'im, they wouldn't stay together that way ... that ain't friendship, is it? A leader can be anyone who 'appens to do something first and everyone joins in, follows, 'e makes suggestions, that's all.'

A good example of this idea of leadership was the adoption of the uniform by the mob.

'Hard kids, older ones ... a few of 'em used to go to football like and we used to see 'em and they used to have Doctor Martins before we'd even seen 'em, braces on the outside and short 'air ... just a couple of 'em. What we done like, Bob, ya know how Bob loves character, 'e loves all this 'ippie lot now, he loved all that booting lot then, and he goes "caw, doesn't 'e look tasty?" and all that and always imagines 'isself as Al Capone. 'E got 'is gear and we sort of thought "well, he looks good" and just sort of copied.'

'We all 'ad the jeans and boots, we copied the 'aircut and then we started.'

'We was the first big group in an area like that. You might 'ave been able to go to a football ground and see 'em but we were the first that we knew of, there could 'ave been others.'

At the same time there was a certain amount of group pressure for conformity. This group pressure was not only applied to dress but all aspects of the individual gang members. The exactness of the uniform demonstrated the rigorousness of conformity which existed in the group. James talked about this pressure when they first began wearing the uniform.

'... and then they all used to say to us "go on then" and we used to say fuck off ... they sort of daring us, ya know what I mean. They say "I wonder what you'd look like" and then you'd look silly so you'd just carry on. ... I used to like making models and all that bollox but when it came out to the other kids, they said "what a prick" and all that lark, so I packed it up.'

'I used to like all that art and stuff but as you got older and people used to say about fights and going out and pulling birds and all that, ya don't do that type of work, that's stupid ... they treat 'em stupid and silly but other things are great because most of them are good at them things.'

'They dress the same 'cause maybe they like looking the same, I don't know. It did look smart. While you had the hells angels looking all dirty and scruffy and 'orrible, that never looked scruffy, did it? ... the 'ippies looked dirty and scruffy, you didn't want to look 'orrible like them. I don't care what you say, 'ippies don't look smart, do they, and skinheads did at one time. It was probably a reaction against 'ippies, because long 'air was in, so we thought we'd do the opposite and 'ave a go at long 'air. Everyone with long 'air was silly then, everyone with long 'air got beat up. Even the birds used to go round and beat the blokes up, we see two birds one day with a shorter crop than ours.'

'The dress was a sort of smart working class in a way, they was normal clothes, just changed the style sort of thing.'

'The older people started wearing 'ippie styles, I don't like 'ippie style, couldn't stand the way they dressed, too scruffy for me, it looked dirty and scruffy. They (skinheads) was just like an army, all copied each other in dressing and listening to blue beat and dance.'

'When skinheads first came out, the word skinhead is just grown with the fashion. It weren't so much fighting, it was just a new thing, weren't it? People 'ad their 'air cut and they were in fashion. Everyone started wearing Ben Shermans, don't know why they started wearing boots cause it weren't something new ... people always wear boots.'

'Then with football it all started linking up but there would 'ave been fighting without skinheads wouldn't there? I mean they would 'ave been called something else, wouldn't they? The uniform gave you the name.'

'If you've got long 'air, right, and you walk about with boots and trousers turned up around your knees and that, they are still going to call you a skinhead.'

'If they hadn't started off with short 'air you wouldn't 'ave been called skinhead, no they would 'ave been called "booties" or something.'

'We weren't copying a fashion, we was making a fashion. It was a working-class movement, 'cause they was working class kids, worn't they?'

There were no girls in the Collinwood gang, there were one or two who were hangers on, but they played no active part in the gang activities. The Collinwood was essentially a male dominated group. Girls were 'second rate' and were useful for 'experimenting'.

'I think our lot (gang) was different from others. You look at kids now or other groups at that same time and they used to be blokes and girls hanging about. Mucking about with each other. But our lot they wasn't like that so much, was they? Occasionally they was I suppose.'

'If you 'ad a bird to go to and you also 'ad an outing with the boys, you would go with the boys.'

'I think all the birds were second rate.'

'The birds used to play a smaller part than they do now. If you could get one round the corner you would. If she was Miss Universe you wouldn't really want to be walking along the street wiv 'er would yer. You just wouldn't want to be seen with 'er.'

'If you was with all the other blokes and there was a bird you would feel embarrassed to go with the bird because the blokes was there.'

'Yer, that was it, that was it.'

'With birds then you was sort of like, experimenting. You would say will she fuck or won't she and you would take 'er round the corner and if she didn't fuck, you'd "Piss off you".'

'The birds that did hang about, they was nothing to go for.'

'They didn't seem like birds really, did they? They was like part of the furniture, it's just that they was there.'

'There was Samantha over the Collinwood, she 'ad right... well she was big at the time, wa'n't she? She was a bit of a nympho, I don't know if she was a nympho. She was a bit more adventuresome.'

'All I can say is if anyone went out of their way to get 'er, they would. They would fucking get 'er easy.'

'In the summer like we didn't 'ave no work, we start, we pulled down 'er bra, and she laying about with all 'er tits hanging out so we are all fucking about like. She loved it didn't she, she really did. So we got all these worms and stuck 'em down 'er bra. And she went "Right now you get them out". We all fucking jumped on 'er. She was just like that all the time. A couple of times she were sitting there on the wall, walk up to her, go like that, take yer 'and, stick it down her bra, she would go "Arr that's nice".'

'She was black and I think that 'ad a lot to do with it.'

'At the time birds were secondary, they was. But I can remember going to Ipswich, it really boosts your morale if you could pull a bird from out somewhere. She could be Miss Universe, but live in Bethnal Green and caw she's a right old...'

Although many of the members of the mob had been friends in school, lived in the same street or block, they all came together on the Collinwood estate out of boredom, not anything to do in particular but looking for 'action'. The atmosphere was one of 'mucking about on the grass and playing football under the lights of the pub. About a dozen of us standing there, just playing football all night.'

The gang was not involved in any particular activity such as stealing cars or house breaking, though individuals of the mob have records of these kinds of offences. Paki-bashing became an activity which they maintain they were all involved in but this was not the prime function of the mob. All of them followed

football and were regular supporters of teams, though they didn't necessarily follow the same teams; West Ham and Tottenham were the most popular. The support of football teams was not the prime function of the mob either. It appears that essentially the mob fulfilled the needs of the individual members, it relieved them of the boredom and gave them the excitement that they sought. 'Ya can 'ave a laugh with a mob can't ya... I suppose you just liked a lot of action then, didn't you... that's all you went in for, action.' The conformity illustrated by the uniform and the uniformity of ideas and behaviour gives them both an identity and security. They also referred to the mob as a sort of community, which shows how essential the mob was to them. Quite plainly belonging to the mob gives each member a status and a sense of being someone. D. J. West in discussing the theories of Albert Cohen observed that 'American juvenile delinquent gangs are recruited from working-class boys frustrated by lack of status.'⁵

5. *The Young Offender*, D. J. West, Penguin, 1967, p. 89.

3 Schools

When the mob had a major importance in the lives of its members, the majority of them were approaching their last year at school. All of them attended local secondary moderns, or 'comprehensives', with the exception of one who attended a grammar school. It is important to recognize that almost all of the members could be classified as 'educationally unsuccessful' and more important that they were all aware of this. This awareness was felt to varying extremes, from the attitude of 'I could 'ave done better at school if I'd tried', to the acute, frustrated and emotional response of 'I ain't no good, they told me at school I ain't no good'. Is it a coincidence that the majority of the mob are 'educationally unsuccessful'? Is it possible that the local schools or the education system contributed to the development of the mob in any way?

We know that the majority of crimes of violence and theft is committed by boys and young men, and the peak on a graph showing ages and convictions is at fifteen years. When the school-leaving age was fourteen the peak was at thirteen years. Now that the school-leaving age is being raised to sixteen, will the peak occur at fifteen years? There are many who believe there is a direct correlation between the statutory school-leaving age and incidence of crime. Other major factors concerning those convicted of crimes include low social status, 'educational failure', and living in a 'bad neighbourhood'.

Mr Harrington believes that one of the causes of skinheadism and all that it represents comes 'from the persistence of secondary modern education in the sense of inferiority that it induces'.

Derek Cox, an unattached Youth Worker in Stepney, said of the failure element in schools: 'It's becoming more and more evident that the old discipline line on the failures is losing control and young people are not taking it lying down any more.

'School is a classical example of this. They are very cane happy (again this is second-hand information) but when they get into their last year they say "you leave us alone now like".' Cox takes this further by suggesting that corporal punishment can in turn be a cause of a violent response. 'I think if you look at Stepney Green, the head there is very disciplinarian. He talks about the dog wagging the tail and not the tail the dog, but all the troubles recently of schools have been concentrated around Stepney Green (January 1971). There is another one today, of another boy being beaten up from that school and there is obviously something going on there associated around discipline, discipline of the violent element, that is having repercussions.'

Headmasters and teachers in the Bethnal Green and Stepney area when interviewed in the autumn of 1970 concerning skinheads, in all cases, categorically stated that there had been no skinheads in their schools. The majority of them were open enough to discuss the 'problem' and in the course of the interview it became clear, through the description of certain incidents, that at some time, or even presently, there were skinheads in the school itself. The refusal to face the facts was most blatant when trying to interview the headmistress of Robert Montefiore, Mrs Macdonald-Murdoch, who stated 'we never have had and we do not presently have any skinheads, or skinhead element in this school', and refused to speak further with us. In fact, the majority of the gang attended this specific school in 1968-9.

'Me and Bob used to go to school at Robert Montefiore and there used to be Pakis and they used to ... I never knew many because I was like in the "A" class and they never seem to get there, they take years to catch up, don't they? and I just about scraped to keep in the "A" class, whereas Bob was just below me and he kept going down and 'e was in "B" and "C" and so 'e knew 'em and they was all Pakis and 'e'd be in school 'ello, so and so, all right? and 'e'd go 'ome at night and beat 'em up, beat their dads up.'

'Dave, 'e's a nutter in school. 'E used to go to exams, get a big quiet hall, real quiet like with a right strict teacher there in the exam room and 'e used to see all the yiddos there doing their exam and Dave is trying to copy off 'em and then the teacher'd say "I have got to be back at school now, I'm leaving Mr Arman

or something here for twenty minutes" and an Indian teacher would come in or some sort of student teacher who didn't know nothing and 'e'd come in the class and Dave would go HEEEEEEEEELLLLLLPPP" and screaming 'is 'ead off and the teacher would go "what's that?" and they'd all start saying 'come on it's you' and they'd just go from quiet to right mad like.'

'Oh Dave used to be really filthy like in school, he used to start singing, "We caught you rubbing off" and you get these right shy teachers and they get all red... "David, I'll tell the headmaster"... "We caught you rubbing off" and all this lot and 'e used to drive 'er mad, or 'e used to get it out, and he used to get it out on the desk and "AYYYYYYEEEE, AYYYYY-EEEE" and all the girls used to scream like and shoot off out like and all the class would go wild.'

In their last year at Robert Montefiore Comprehensive School for a while there was a temporary Indian headmaster. Though it was quite obvious that the school had many problems, it is interesting to find that the members of the gang had great respect for him.

'But we 'ad an Indian 'eadmaster... but cause 'e was one of them Indians that are like the leaders of the revolution, they want to go against things, they is always for the young, a lot of Indians are... anyways, this Indian, although 'e didn't seem to mind the blokes who done bad, he seemed to like them and get on better with 'em than with the clever kids. Like Dave, he used to like Dave... Dave and some little kid beat up a teacher and 'e just said "David, Keith up to my room" and then 'e just talked them into not getting into trouble because they'd get 'im into trouble and giving 'em a cup of coffee... and they all respected 'im.'

Before they left that year Mrs MacDonald-Murdoch was appointed as the permanent headmistress.

'She saw me and Bob in the corridor and that we was in our skinhead uniform and she said "march after me up to my room"... and then we was marching after 'er and she told us to pick up a piece of paper and I told 'er I worn't no dustman, then she told us to go 'ome and take off our uniform and not to come back till we did... so we went 'ome and never went back to school again.'

One of the reasons children are in school is because of the law. 'It (school) is a place where *they* make you go and where *they* tell you to do things and where *they* try to make your life unpleasant if you don't do them or don't do them right.'

'School, it's something you've got to 'ave. Nobody really liked it did they... why... well, because it's something you've got to do, it's like work isn't it?'

'We went to a right good school, didn't we... they thought flicking ink pellets was part of the lesson. There were some things in school that you liked... you liked say, football. That was only one thing and a lot of people liked a lot of things. Say, you liked 'istory, and that you go to school, you 'ave to do 'istory, maths, English and that... if you 'ad the choice you would do 'istory, 'istory, 'istory and football, wouldn't you?'

'If there weren't teachers in school you wouldn't muck about as much as you would if there were.'

'If there wasn't a teacher in school ya wouldn't go, ya wouldn't play about but ya wouldn't learn, ya wouldn't learn a thing.'

'If a teacher says don't muck about, ya do. When we was at school we 'ad a free afternoon and all ya do is play cards; if ya 'ad all week free you would play football and do all sorts of things wouldn't ya but ya wouldn't muck about throwing pellets about and things like that and normal school pranks, you wouldn't do that. All we used to do was fight and flick ink pellets and things like that but you don't do that on your free afternoon, ya only do it in *their* time, so that you could get caught.'

In *Compulsory Miseducation*, Paul Goodman talks about education as

an arm of the police, providing cops and concentration camps paid for in the budget under the heading 'Board of Education'. The educational role is, by and large, to provide – at public and parents' expense – apprentice training for corporations, government, and the teaching profession itself, and also to train the young, as New York's Commissioner of Education has said... 'to handle constructively their problems of adjustment to authority'.⁷

6. *How Children Fail*, John Holt, Pitman, 1964, p. 24; Penguin, 1969.

7. *Compulsory Miseducation*, Paul Goodman, Vintage Books, 1962, p. 18; Penguin, 1971.

The gang believes that 'only young teachers and the enthusiastic ones go out of their way to help. The old ones don't.' Even so there is a persistent animosity towards teachers.

'They push it into you ... they don't let you do the type of work that you want to do and let you get on with it ... you resent people telling you what you 'ave got to learn, if you think you're no good at a subject then you resent people making you do it. You learn a lot of things you don't want to know.'

'When we are talking about disliking teachers, no teacher goes out to get on the wrong side of you. Say you like 'istory and the teacher is strict at 'istory, you'll love that but if you hate maths and the teacher is strict, you won't like 'er because you don't like the subject that they do.'

'At school in geography they used to give you a book and they used to write the same thing on the board as was in the book so you could copy it ... which I think was a bit stupid. Cause if you 'ave got a book, you can copy it from the book ... anyway, why copy it cause you can always read the book.'

Despite all of the frustrations and hindrances that they came up against in the schools, many of them still sought an opportunity for a real learning situation, and would even use their 'own time' to follow up these interests. For example, Knuckler, whose greatest interest was animals.

'Well I used to be in charge of the animals and pets up there. I used to go in after school to do it. See, him and me went in and we never had to, but that was only because I liked animals. I liked general studies because I liked to get them talking about animals. I would probably 'ave liked maths if it had had something to do with animals.'

'If they could feed the lessons like from what you liked ... say John likes as he said, betting or football, if they could teach 'im maths or that through that, it would automatically make 'im interested in that subject because it would be what he was interested in. Say he was interested in betting you would start teaching 'im maths from odds and things like that. Say he wanted to teach you fractions or goal averages at football, I think that would be a terrific help.'

'I couldn't say just one thing, like I liked 'istory and disliked maths. I disliked anything that you 'ad to do from a book. If

you was told by a teacher how to do a sum, you had to take it from the book and in geography about maps so you learn where certain parts of countries are and contours and all that, only them things that I done meself, that I created, like art or any essays. Anything that I could make up or learn things from doing, by learning meself and doing it meself. I couldn't do anything like science and anything like that, where you was told. I can't explain it really. I didn't like doing things that people had already done 'cause you can make something yourself, something that you can be proud of, someone ain't making it for you. What you do is your own. Say in art class, they put something in the middle of the room and say "draw that" I wouldn't want to, I want to make things up out of my own head because everyone else was doing it and I wanted to do different. I had something in my 'ead, I could see it in my 'ead right. I could see it in my mind what I wanted to draw and I didn't like being told to do something else, didn't like it. Don't like "no option". I don't like being told what to do. I found that I work better with the teachers that I like but I found that it didn't make me any better at the subject, ya know what I mean.'

John Holt emphasizes this same point when he says that a child learns, at any moment, not by using the procedure that seems best to us (the teachers) but the one that seems best to *him*; by fitting into his structure of ideas and relationships, his mental mode of reality, not the piece we think comes next but the one he thinks comes next.⁸

'I like getting "this is good" because that is a compliment on your work, I don't like it when they start to have a go at you. When I did my stuff on animals, they would always have a different opinion than me, because I don't like pretty birds, ya know, I like things like eagles and vultures, ya know what I mean and they used to say, "why haven't you got the bird of paradise in it?" ... well I don't like the fucking 'orrible things!'

Educational success is measured by the amount of conformity, to the school values. On the whole, these values were rejected by the gang itself. The schools seem to be more concerned with this conformity than with the individual student. This is confirmed by the Newsom report. 'The young, though they hate

8. *How Children Fail*, John Holt, p. 126.

to be told so, are born conformists. They conform easily to the pattern of school life and if it is a good school, this is a pretty sound pattern . . ." Gil was the only 'successful' member of the gang – he conformed. The gang looked upon this by saying:

'School helped Gil because Gil helped 'imself. 'E's tried ain't he? I knows there is other people who's tried and failed but he has tried and succeeded. I'd say that most people who don't go to school would say they was lazy . . . I could 'ave done more if I 'adn't been lazy.'

They made an exception for Gil, however in relation to other 'successful' students there was a more derisive attitude.

'The people who got anywhere in school was Jewish, well they was in my school anyway. Say they give us homework or say memorize this. So, their parents, as they say when they come to school meetings. "What – I lock 'im up in 'is bedroom and make 'im do 'is 'omework. I let 'im out once a week to go to see football over Spurs." And that was that, their parents made them do it, made them do it, forced them, though some must have had the will power themselves. Where me, I wouldn't think "cor, I've got 'istory tomorrow". I'd be out on the streets. I didn't 'ave no interest. I couldn't be bothered devoting all my life to learning. I wanted to do other things.'

Successful children were ironically referred to as 'dummoes'.

The gang was influenced by outside values and authorities' values concerning their schools, which are directly or indirectly a reflection on themselves.

'When I went to secondary school, your school (Stepney Green) and Daneford was the sort of school that when you couldn't get into Morpeth and a couple of others, you went there. . . . If you had general studies at your school, then you are a real goon, because they only give that to the right goons. You say your school is better, how come then there is all wogs and Pakis in your school?'

'Comprehensive education is still no better. Our school turned comprehensive . . . well, myself I don't know any difference between comprehensive and secondary, they're the same, that's what I thought it was, there's only a difference between comprehensive and a grammar. They still have grades in a com-

prehensive and a grammar school. You 'ad A1 and A2, you 'ad the top-notch right, they were the clever and the not so clever, then you had the Bs and Cs. Because they put on a board "Robert Montefiore Comprehensive" it doesn't mean it is a comprehensive, does it? That's theory, isn't it, while in practice it ain't. The theory of comprehensive schools is that everyone gets the same education, which cannot be. It's impossible. It's like everyone 'aving equal rights, ya can't 'ave it that way, it's like communism, it's impossible. You can't 'ave the same education because everyone's different.'

'We were the last year to do the 11-plus exam . . . they only scrapped it in some schools, they didn't scrap it in all the schools, there was still a form of 11-plus. They had a teacher to say who was to go to grammar schools, you 'ad to pass a test though to see if you could go there.'

'Public school is a better education than a state school because they have a name to keep up. They are not fussy in the state school, like in the public schools. Moneyed people go to the public schools. Can you imagine yourself, when you coming out of a primary school, going to a private school, with a teacher stuck in front of you on your own with a couple of others? Can you imagine sitting among a load of rich kids, snobs?'

'The rich send their kids to public schools, one of the reasons is just to get rid of their kids. You get more attention from the teachers, not only that, if they find out that you are good at a certain subject, they find more time and specialize on that subject.'

'If you're good at science and not so much at maths, in normal school you still get the same lessons. The teachers cannot cater for everyone, there are not enough teachers. Not only that, in the public school you get specialized treatment. Ninety-nine per cent of the teachers in the state school couldn't get a job in the public schools anyway.'

'I'm saying that everyone should get as good an education as they get in private schools.'

This idea is supported by Michael Duane.

The aristocracy and the wealthy upper-middle class have their young educated in public schools – private schools outside the state system. In these schools the staff come from a similar social background to that of their pupils; they are paid at higher levels than in the state

system; 84 per cent of them are graduates, mainly at Oxford and Cambridge and there is one teacher for every eleven pupils.¹⁰

'Most of the pupils in the colleges come from public schools anyway, ya know Oxford and Cambridge and that. You don't get someone from Stepney Green, Robert Montefiore, or Raines, or not many anyway, going to Oxford and Cambridge. That's how you get people running the country who are idiots, not knowing anything about life. Through public schools you get people ruling the country who know nothing about life, they are the people who 'ave money and ... like Edward Heath is a parrot, ya know what I mean like, 'e 'as just been to Eton and all 'is ministers are Eton-bashers ... Eton, Cambridge wherever they go they know nothing about real life. Whereas someone like George Brown, someone who 'as been through the trade unions and that, knows something about life.'

Michael Duane continues,

Eighty per cent of all the most important positions of power and decision – members of the cabinet, judges, directors of corporations and nationalized industries, senior civil servants, etc. – are products of public schools.¹¹

'You don't use everything that you are taught at school. Say, you are a van driver, you don't use 'istory, science, technical drawing, woodwork or metalwork. So they teach you subjects that you aren't going to use. If the van breaks down you ain't going to repair it, cause that ain't your job.'

'They don't teach you these things at school to cater for you to be a van boy or a butcher's boy, you're not supposed to become them things. It's only if you ain't no good at school or don't bother, you're supposed to go to college and that. That's what school is part of, they ain't supposed to teach you everyday things. You're supposed to go for, say you learnt 'istory, you're supposed to take it to further studies of university.'

'If nobody's supposed to be a van boy who's going to do it?'

'The people who don't get on in a subject, who don't get on in school.'

'But you're saying that you 'ave got to be a fucking professor if you go to school, if you want to take them subjects up. You're saying that science 'as nothing to do with outdoor life?'

10. 'Why Comprehensive', *Libertarian Teacher*, no. 6, p. 4.

11. p. 4.

'You're only learning these things in case you wanna take them further, in case you wanna go to college.'

'We ain't talking about labouring, senseless jobs, like what you do or I do, or things like that. You're talking about intelligent jobs like banking and clerking, electrical engineering and surveying, things like that. Everyone 'as got to 'ave an education no matter 'ow intelligent they are.'

'It is true though that school is aimed at people who are getting good marks in school and not the "unintelligent". Exams are to pick out the clever ones from the dumb ones, they want to find out your intelligence.'

'Exams are fucking stupid and they build up a class barrier.'

'You 'aven't got to 'ave exams cause you don't 'ave to work all through the year, except for a few months before the exam, when you can swot like hell and pass it. An exam isn't an intelligence test really, it's just answering questions, isn't it?'

'Intelligence is I.Q. If you are intelligent, it is what you 'ave learnt. Some people think that you're intelligent if you are good at Maths and English, don't they?'

A headmaster at a local secondary school in Bethnal Green stated that he had 'never met an intelligent or literate skinhead'. This headmaster assumes that literacy and educational ability are the basic indicators of intelligence. The headmaster is in fact stating that skinheads do not conform to his interpretation of intelligence and literacy. His interpretation having, all probability, been based upon a value system and culture alien to the skinhead outside of the school. It may well be that the headmaster if thrown into the skinhead subculture for six hours a day would appear to the members of that subculture to be lacking in both intelligence and literacy.

'Intelligence is general knowledge. Intelligence is how you value things. Common sense is all part and parcel of intelligence. It is how capable you are of using your brain to grasp situations, to work things out for yourself.'

By intelligence we mean a style of life, a way of behaving in various situations, and particularly in new, strange and perplexing situations. The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do.¹²

12. *How Children Fail*, p. 165.

'Intelligence is memorizing.'

'What??? Like a parrot?'

'The basis of education today is more or less how you teach a parrot. They work on the basis that if you tell the kids the same thing so many times they remember it but if you told your parrot things so many times, he would remember it but that is not really intelligence. That is just remembering things.'

'I think intelligence is just common sense, which ya don't learn common sense at school anyway. Common sense is like everyone learns it off each other ... it's knowing not to cross the road when a car is coming, that's what we mean by common sense.'

'Yeah, everyday things. Ya don't learn everyday things at school. Just because "Safety Sam" comes to school, doesn't mean you learn road sense, does it?'

'But say, after you start to speak and after you start to read and write and that, you get your own common sense, you build it up yourself after ya 'ear people speak and looking at the telly and things like that and from experience. You go to school with common sense, they boost it up a bit more, they give you the answers to things. Say you ask a teacher something, they give you an answer. Maybe when you're asked a similar question, not the same question, you can give roughly the answer. It is the ability to pick your memory to suit the situation, that's what common sense is.'

'If you learn it by experience, it's not that you don't learn it at school or you do learn it at school, you learn it everywhere. You 'ave to learn, not only copy. It's like learning to walk, you waddle about, fall on your ass, you get up until you can walk properly. You learn your own style of doing it. If you're taught you 'ave to copy ... if a teacher teaches you a sum, she does it herself on the blackboard and you copy her and then you develop your own style. You're still copying if you're taught. Some people are clever in some things, other people are clever in other things. Everyone is born with intelligence and everyone branches out into different things they are intelligent in. It is interest mainly, you 'ave to 'ave interest to learn.'

4 Clubs

During the summer, when the nights were light, the gang would meet on the Collinwood estate. They would perhaps play football or just walk the streets – most of their activities were outside. However during the winter months, it was too cold and dark for them to meet on the street and the mob was forced to find an indoor meeting place. If this had not been possible, as a group the gang may well have drifted apart. The opening of the Collinwood club readily provided this needed meeting place. This also placed restrictions on their behaviour and in turn produced problems.

'We couldn't find another club when the Collinwood was shut down. It shut down because we got fed up with it after a while and we started chucking things about and a few windows got broken and so they shut it down and when they opened it up again, we got fed up ... some said "smash it up again" and we said "no, leave it out". They liked the woman so they just went.'

They left the Collinwood because they were bored but perhaps more important was that within the club they had lost their independence. The fact that 'Sophie was like your mum' was a problem inasmuch as it restricted their behaviour. The mob was then dependent on other youth clubs for a meeting place. Their opinion of youth clubs was generally a low one.

'A lot of clubs are run by associations, like the Repton club, they lay down a lot of rules that you've got to follow. Most of them clubs are fairly strict. They are somewhere to go at night to keep you off the streets. They are somewhere to go when kids have nowhere to go. I never really wanted to go to one of them clubs that 'ave tennis and all this lark.'

'When I first went to Stepney Green, they didn't 'ave a club there at night. They did when I was in the fourth year but when

you're in the fourth year, ya don't usually go to these after school things. They 'ad some sort of club there but it was for doing 'omework and all, playing guitars or something like that but I didn't bother about that because I was in my fourth year.'

'Didn't like the sort of club like the Repton - I thought it would be something like everybody sits down and plays fucking draughts. They used to let you do more or less what you wanted as long as you didn't damage the facilities. They used to 'ave a special teacher there to teach you how to use the equipment.'

'Yeah, but then it's like school, ain't it. Clubs are just an extension of school.'

Many of the mob members rejected clubs without visiting them. This was based on their assumption that youth clubs were used by 'dummoes'.

'You used to look down on the other kids cause we thought we were worse than 'em, tougher than 'em.'

'I 'aven't been to many clubs, 'ave I? I don't think they're allocated for skinhead types. You 'ave to abide by the rules and things like that. That's the type of club some people like.'

The area youth officer, Mr Finch, confirms that the youth services do not cater to skinheads. 'The skinhead mentality is not a new one, it can be found in many adults as well as youths. Granted that the fashion has managed to consolidate the problem and that young people more readily fit into the skinhead mentality. The skinheads do not fit into the present youth services. When they arrive in a large gang, they are a threat to the youth leader by their very presence.' Derek Cox goes further by saying 'I think that what has happened now, and the skinheads if you like, were the first identifiable group to make this theory come true, that is, if you provide large-scale activities for working-class young people, you have got to have a very strong bouncer element for it to work now. In that gathering young people together in large numbers creates friction and violence. I think this true of three youth clubs I know of which have large memberships and if they go on doing it they'll have to shut down soon.'

The mob thought little of the youth clubs provided but they had no alternative but to use the clubs, as a continuous use of cafés would be too expensive. The youth service, on the other

hand, infer that it is the skinheads' fault that they do not fit into the plans of the youth services. Therefore, when the gang started going to other clubs, they became bored, provoked by petty regulations and in the end would cause a situation where they had to move on to a different club.

'We went round to St Hilda's, the "hippie man", and we started out all right in there. "All right, Peter (not the same Peter as at the Paint House), this and that and the other" ... it was all right and then they started taking liberties, like taking the piss out of 'im and that, weren't nothing else to do, just 'ave a go at 'im ... "eh you, you cunt".'

On going from one club to another, the mob developed a reputation amongst the other kids and were referred to as 'The Collinwood'. They became increasingly aware of 'their territory' but were unaware of the anxiety that they produced amongst the other young people attending the youth clubs. Their first visits to the Paint House were to search out a new club for themselves and also to check out Dick Kite, who they had heard 'Reckoned 'imself to be a geezer.'

'Then that Mac who went to my school, 'e said to me about some club and I says "Is it good?" and 'e says it is all right and we come round there. Remember I came round there one night with Dave and Dave was taking it out of Charley Arthur We just went down there didn't we, we got interested because of that Dick Kite, see? Got interested in 'im cause he thought 'e was 'ard and we ain't ever 'eard of 'im.'

'We all went round the Paint House to see if there was gonna be a fight with Kite and then we smashed the place up. There was a fight, Bob, Steve and Gary 'ad a fight with these kids at the Seebright (Youth Club) and they thought the kid was gonna come back and then we went to the St Hilda's Youth Club and Gary and all the lot, all tooled up, and we walked down the road and they got nicked.'

The Collinwood itself was entirely male and an added attraction of youth clubs was a place to meet girls. This was also true of the Paint House.

'Well, Bob and Alex came before me and pulled down two birds, Blondie and Marcelle, and then we came round, remember? They 'ad this tanner paying and we was all 'aving a go at

Jilly Crown before she was a certified whore. I thought she was but we was mucking about with 'er. We used to sing about 'er at football, 'member? "Jilly, Jilly, Jilly Crown, Get your knickers down."

'I don't care what you say, I think that we owe Crowney a lot. A fucking lot. Even in Scotch. We used to go up 'er place, just drink what we liked. The times we 'ad to carry each other 'ome. That was of a Sunday night like. What did it take two fucking scotches and we was on our back.'

'No, I remember the time she asked me to go with 'er, "Go on, go on"; she really repulsed me that girl.'

'The things that everyone got out of 'er. I mean it wasn't only 'er hole. It wasn't, was it? It was everything else.'

'No. What did Olly do that night, she was standing there biting her nails and 'e was fingering 'er and there she was. . . . He got 'old of 'er in the toilet, didn't 'e, and she was standing there biting 'er nails, and 'e was fucking fingering 'er, she was standing there biting her fucking nails merrily away, as if . . . fucking stupid bird.'

'Dave used to sit in the "Bunk Up Room", he used to get 'is bollocks out, and 'e used to say to me "Go and tell Crowney to come up 'ere and wank." You know how 'e used to wank mad didn't 'e? So I go down and tell 'er to come up. She would walk up there and I'd say "Davey wants to tell you something in there." She would walk in there and, and scream, you know and come running out, every time. She used to go up there every single time. She knew what was 'appening like, she just used to go up there.'

'What used to make me laugh was the way she was passed around.'

'Someone would pack 'er up in the evening and then 'e would say to 'is mate "Quick, in there". They used to be in 'er up 'er 'ouse.'

'It was second class then, sex and all that.'

'At that time people just didn't go for birds as much as they do now. What it was, it was great while you got it, but when it's not there you don't miss it, you don't go out of yer way. Like the girls they was chatting you, they was after you more than you was after them, in a sense.'

'Yer, that's true, when you hung about they used to tell so and so to tell so and so to tell you . . .'

'If you 'eard of a bloke asking a bird . . . silly cunt. Same as if they packed you in, fucking disgrace.'

'That's one of the reasons you never went out with 'em in case they did pack you in.'

'I think part of it was jealousy, if you think about it. I used to be in Crowney's bedroom on a Sunday night with 'er and every five minutes someone would be banging on the door. Now why would they do that if they wasn't a bit jealous? They were, everyone was just that little bit weren't they? I'll never forget the time when I was fucking in there, wasn't I? Trousers down round me ankles and this cunt's pushed the fucking door open, ain't 'e? Now you imagine yer trousers round yer ankles, you can't walk. I just fucking flew across, pissed as arse-holes as well, on the fucking floor laying there. I couldn't move. I fucking struggling, it was like being tied up it was. No, we used to 'ave some fucking great times up there.'

'Yer really underrated birds though. If yer went somewhere and you got 'old of a great big whopping 'orror, no one used to take any notice. Not a blind bit of notice. But as soon as you got back to the Paint House and got 'old of Crowney everyone would be 'Ahhhhh Ahhhhh 'e's got 'old of Crowney.'

Within a very short time the gang began to see the Paint House as theirs and began to encourage other friends to come to the Paint House as well.

'We was playing football and then Ted come over and 'cause we was banned from St Ann's then, 'e says "why not come over to the Paint House?" and we went round there. There was only two clubs down our way, that was St Ann's and the Paint House and there was a big difference between them.'

'I only ever went up to the Paint House and down to St Ann's. There (St Ann's) if you shouted or mucked about, you was barred from coming, barred for a week if you swore or something like that. Well, St Ann's was better for facilities but I preferred the Paint House. If the Paint House had had good facilities, you couldn't of beat it ya know, but with people running about and all that you can't keep facilities, footballs, table tennis, it was always busted up. In St Ann's they was always busted

up too . . . sometimes you only 'ad to run around and they'd bar you or something like that . . .'

A few of the members of the Collinwood were unhappy at the Paint House but went there to be with their mates.

'Well I went up to Tower Hamlets, that's a girls' school mind . . . I used to 'ave a good time up there every night. They used to play basketball and I enjoyed myself up there playing basketball with friends better than I used to enjoy myself at the Paint House. I went there cause all you lot was there. I think clubs gotta 'ave rules, else you're gonna 'ave it all smashed up. Gary when 'e went up there kicking table-tennis tables and throwing bats at each other. . . . When I left there 'cause I started earning bread and all that, I went up to the Shandy club with Tevman and it was pretty much the same as the other except it 'ad no basketball. A club that 'ad rules is better than a club without rules, cause you'll get idiots that'll take liberties, always 'ad a bloke taking liberties up at the Paint House.'

The other members considered it more than an ordinary club.

'Tim used to go there, 'e was the first one that called it the Paint House Factory. We 'ad nowhere else to go. Fix the place up, wreck it and then build it up again, that was the Paint House. We was curious about the place, it was funny. It was nothing like any place I'd been in before. No one to tell you what to do. Some little girls painting and drawing with crayon and making baskets. I thought it was a load of nutters all right, a right ole nut 'ouse Then I see Nat Watson, thought 'e was about ten years old, and 'e's just nicked a car . . . they left a car outside, there was nothing wrong with it and we used to just get in it and cut it up. I can't imagine it - just cut it up. I thought it was a laugh that night when we went down to the bottom 'all, when we was singing into the tape.'

'Member that night when we put that geezer into a box and just started throwing lighted papers into it? The kid says "Can I join your gang?" . . . so we says "To get into our gang you got to get into that box and see if you can stay in there for five minutes" . . . so 'e got into the box and we kicked it all round the fucking 'all, ran it into the wall and then lit matches and put old paper into it and 'e's going "oh man, you're burning me" . . . we singed 'is 'air and then kicked it more about the 'all. Then

when 'e gets out we says "caw, you done well, ten minutes in there, all right, good boy." Then we get 'im outside and sit 'im on a chair on the pavement and says "Now you got to 'ave a skinhead cut" and got out the ole scissors and cut all 'is 'air off. . . . Yeah, 'e was just a big dummo 'cause 'e let us do what we liked with 'im.'

'Member that Dr John and them 'ippies that come up 'ere? We lit the 'air of one of them 'ippies, do you remember?'

'How about the time when the television people came from France . . . Alex was talking into the telly as if 'e were fucking David Frost or something.'

Basically the Paint House was anti-authoritarian, no facilities or activities were supplied beyond the building itself, therefore leaving any organization to the people who came to use it. This caused problems for the members who had always been in situations or clubs where authorities supplied what they thought fit and controlled their behaviour by the enforcement of the regulations. This put the gang into a position where they were responsible for their own behaviour and not dependent on outside authority to which they could react. Initially they pushed to get an authority reaction. They wanted rules to be imposed so that they could decide what to do, because without the rules, which they so often rejected, they felt insecure.

'When we first come 'ere you told us that this was our place, to do what we liked but we didn't believe you. We tried to force you to tell us what to do . . . we didn't realize that this was the type of place we were looking for.'

Even though the club slowly began to organize their own activities, not all of the members were ever able to resolve the problem of needing authority of some sort.

'A place what you can do what you like, to an extent do what you like. Yeah, that's the type of place I like. I used to look at it as some place to go, weren't it? There weren't nowhere else to go, never even thought of going to the Daneford Youth Centre, it's too sad, there were no one up there that you knew. You knew everyone up at the Paint House There weren't no rules or nothing, you do things up there, play football and that.'

'No, you got to 'ave rules. Pubs, everywhere you go 'as rules, even public parks. You've got to keep 'em. I used to go to St

Ann's as much as I'd go to the Paint House, if anyone else was going down there or not. I used to like a game of billiards or table tennis and I used to take notice of the rules but at the Paint House they used to 'ave games and by not 'aving rules people used to go round and bust 'em and when you tell 'em, they usually just laugh and carry on.'

'But you used to play games up there.'

'Yeah, but you lot went fucking mad, wouldn't ya?'

'Yeah, that's the only place I used to smoke, in ole Pete's, ole Pete never worried, 'e used to follow me about and show me out and put me on the front doorstep and say "Here, go roll it there" . . . that was really the only rule they ever 'ad.'

'We tried to make rules up at the Paint House and no one would abide by 'em. We used to 'ave subs but people would get in without paying 'em.'

'No, I used to pay 'em. I used to like the Paint House, it was all right up there. Most youth clubs are aimed at conforming to society more.'

'I thought it was all right but I preferred to go down where there was facilities.'

'You might enjoy it more when you're there in these other clubs but like with the Paint House, when you went on outings it was all free – you know what I mean, all free to do what you want. When we went out we done what we liked, where in other clubs like you couldn't even swear. Well, that came natural to people, you must be able to swear, mustn't you? . . . whereas if you got a fine every time you swore, it would be ridiculous – or banned from the club every time you swore.'

'The Paint House was all right when you was downstairs and we 'ad everything, then they broke all the bats.'

'No, no the ceiling fell down first and was condemned.'

'The upstairs all the time was wrecked. Now in a properly run club, no matter how many lights you smashed, they was always replaced.'

'Yeah, but you're paying subs at these places.'

'But I would pay subs where there were proper facilities. You 'ave got to 'ave subs 'cause if you've got no subs you ain't got no money coming in to buy table tennis balls and that. It's

got to come out of somebody's pocket. We used to pay other clubs a tanner a night and you got all you wanted.'

'That's backed by the ILEA, they're all backed.'

'Some people like the clubs you like and some people don't, so why shouldn't there be both. You ain't got to go to the other one, you can pick.'

Dennis lived very near to the club building and had very mixed feelings, reactions about Paint House-type of clubs. At the same time he was keenly aware of the failure of existing systems. 'I think that vandalism is caused by the situation itself, they 'ave got nothing else to do but vandalize. They (the local authorities) have giv'em this Weaver's Fields over 'ere, a lovely big play area and it is used, it is well used but it is dark at six and seven at night when the boys are going out, ya know what I mean. They 'ave got no evening facilities, there is nothing on offer for youngsters, there never really was. Even youth clubs. I used to go to youth clubs but they never really were the answer to my problem. I dunno what it is, I don't know what we need to giv'em. Ya know I think things like adventure playgrounds are in the right direction, for much younger children, better than swing parks and see-saws, but I don't know about teenagers. . . . Boys sixteen and seventeen want to sit in a pub and 'ave a drink. Why? I'm not 'appy with the rigid youth club, where they're sort of regimented, where they 'ave to fit to a certain pattern. I cannot entirely agree with the Paint House project. I don't agree with them taking over the thing entirely 'cause you end up with a Lord of the Flies situation, but you 'ave still got to give 'em some scope to organize themselves . . . everyone 'as got to be disciplined, unfortunately, that's the character of life. People 'ave to live by a certain pattern. They must behave towards each other in a certain way.'

In spite of their ambivalent feelings towards the lack of authority, the members did run the activities of the Paint House for eighteen months. They were at the same time aware of the opportunity available to them to run the club themselves, whereas other clubs that had committees only allowed for superficial involvement.

'The good thing about the Repton club is that about twelve

or thirteen kids up there all 'ave a chance to run the club on a committee.'

'Where you say the members of the Repton 'ave a chance to run the club, they can't say a thing there.'

'They do, they pass everything.'

'They pass what? Like you can smoke, silly things like that. I only slept at the Paint House once in all the time it was opened but if you come back from a football match late and you couldn't get indoors, you'd lost your key or something, you could always get into the Paint House, you were never turned away from the door. You couldn't do that up at the Repton.'

'But up at the Repton they leave at 10.30 at night and don't come back 'til 7.00 the next night, so they ain't going to let you stay the night.'

'Well that's what I mean, they don't really let you run the club.'

'Yeah, but they got money up the Repton. The kids don't actually run everything, they run the facilities.'

'They run the times on the table tennis . . . five pence a ball . . . come back and all this. That's all the kids do at the Repton. It was proved that - we was fifteen when we went down there (the Paint House) first - you are not really capable of running a club 'til you 'ave left school or until you are in your last year at school, sort of thing.'

'Some kids like them sort of clubs like the Repton and some don't, do they? Well, I mean not everyone goes to youth clubs, do they? So if you've got both types, you are well away, you are catering for everyone.'

'One thing that was good at the Paint House, how many fights was there between us? There wasn't many as I remember it. There was with people coming down there and looking for trouble, but not between no one. I admit there was people running round and 'aving goes but there was never really fights, was there?'

'Yeah, people round the Collinwood, they went everywhere. They went to all the clubs but they eventually went to the Paint House and stuck to the Paint House, not knowing they were stuck there because they were doing what they were like. They never saw that they was, that was the reason. Yes, thinking about

it, you know why you went there but at the time. . . . You went to the Collinwood, St Hilda's, Morpeth Club, you went to all the clubs and just by coincidence that one came round because it was in the area, so you went to that club. It was something out of this world, you had never been to anything like it, it was so different to any other club that you just stuck there.'

As has been stated earlier in this chapter, the existing youth services were unable to cater for the 'skinhead type' of youth within the gang structure. The Collinwood was unable to settle into any of the youth clubs provided. This was mainly due to the fact that the social structure of the gang was the antithesis of the social structure of the clubs, inasmuch as the gang would attempt to dominate the club and the club authorities would attempt to regulate the activities of the gang. However when the gang arrived at the Paint House they simply removed the opposition (Dick Kite, etc.) and took over. Only then was the Collinwood able to exist, and to use the Paint House in the same way that they had initially used the Collinwood estate. It was in this atmosphere, where they had a relative amount of security, that the individual members of the gang developed to a point where they no longer needed the gang itself and it slowly disintegrated to a point where the 'Collinwood gang' no longer existed.

5 Jobs

'You 'ave got to 'ave a good education to get a good job.'

The members of the gang know by experience that they don't qualify for the description of a good education and will have little opportunity of obtaining 'good jobs'. Good jobs, to them, are those which are high paid, provide a high status and are by definition non-manual.

'You 'ave to study to be a bank manager or things like that. If you worked on a labouring job, building and demolition and that, you can earn forty to fifty quid a week but you have to graft though.'

From all sides young people are told that anything is obtainable as long as you work hard enough for it, that there are equal opportunities and it all depends on personal effort. This image is further projected by the schools, mass media, advertisements, etc. The youth leader, Michael Trotter, expounds on this idea. 'I always say to these kids that they are immensely lucky to live in London because there are so many exciting opportunities, jobs, literally anything ... foreign travel, big money, but you have to know, you have to have a certain amount of intelligence and enterprise and be shown how to do it. The London kids are a bit better at it.' Nearly all of the members of the Collinwood initially went to the Youth Employment to find work.

'I first ran into the Youth Employment in school. Then when I left school, I didn't go up there for about three months and when I went up there they just got me a job at the 'ousing office and I didn't wanna know ... so I never went back there no more. ... There was a woman who used to come round school and talk 'bout careers.'

'The Youth Employment 'ave only got the school to go by, they 'ave got no other recommendations, 'ave they. If I go to the Youth Employment, right, and they 'ave no report on me

and they asked "did you do well at school?" I am bound to say yes. When they get school reports they don't need to ask. When you are in school mucking about you don't think about school giving reports to the Youth Employment.'

'Intelligence is important 'cause if you are thick, they know it. Like the schools tell 'em what you are and what you was like at school and they think that you're gonna be the same at work. If you was lazy at school they think you're gonna be lazy at work and they give you a rough time.'

None of them had a very high regard for the Youth Employment.

'They didn't do much for me really. I got my own job in the beginning. Then after a bit I went up there and they got me a job in the print. I stayed there for about a year or so, then I left there and went to a book binding firm, then I started going up to the Labour Exchange after that. The Youth Employment and the Labour, they're just interested, when you come in, in getting rid of you as quick as they can.'

'I found my first job and then I got rid of that and then went straight up the Youth-O, they found me one but it just seemed that they pawned me off with anything. If you're thick they don't wanna know you but if you got a bit of education, and you go in they can't do enough for you. If you want a trade or something, you go up to the upper blokes, the ones upstairs but if you want just anything, they'll keep you downstairs. I went up there and they just seemed to pawn me off, they didn't wanna know.'

'It depends on how many times you've been up there. If you've been up there once, it's all right but if you've been up there ten times they just don't wanna know and they keep telling you to come back the next day.'

This is a fairly common complaint. They found that when individuals needed help finding a job where they could settle or when they had trouble keeping a job, the Youth Employment Office tended to show less interest.

'Whenever you go there when a lot of people have left school, it's 'ard. I've been up there quite a few times and they still don't wanna know. They try to give you a good job at first but then if you don't stick to it they'll just give you anything. It all

depends on how many times you go up there, whether you are a nuisance or not.'

The Youth Office itself says that it is interested in helping youths to get a career. This is an obvious disappointment to many of the young people when it doesn't turn out to be the case.

'They're supposed to get you a career but they don't seem to do that, they just seem to try and get you anything.'

Members of the gang often pointed out that those who are supposed to be 'more intelligent' appear to get better treatment from the Youth Employment Office. For example, Jim went into the office with some of his friends.

'I got my job and didn't think much of 'em, they weren't interested. I knew what they were like before I went up there. When you go there, when I went there, they knew that I 'ad taken O-levels and so they think that you can do something. So they was all right with me but I seen them other geezers up there, like Morry and all that, and Pricey when he came up there with me, when they see you just sitting there and smoking or somethin' like that, they just show you out. If they think you're ... if you make out that you are a bit clever or something, then they look after you.'

'Another thing wrong with the Youth-O ... if you 'ave nice short 'air they think that you're all nice and sweet and nice. If you go up there with long 'air or a crop, they treat you like a slob. When I was in there with my mate, Freddie, and 'e was two classes lower than me, I mean 'e was really clever ... they gives me a real shitty job like and they wanted to give 'im a job in the meat market. Ya know, in the office and 'e says "do what? what'cha 'ave to do for that then?" They go more by your appearance than by your brain.'

'When I first went up there they was all right but when you go up a couple of times they don't wanna 'elp. Anyway they did send me off to a load of jobs. The first one was about six quid a week french polishing. Anyway, I lost that one after two hours ... up the Labour's the best, you get better paid jobs up there.'

Derek Cox tends to give some support to some of the arguments and complaints of the lads. 'On average the girls are bet-

ter off than the boys in that they are close to the city and there are very many very good jobs if they can get good secretarial training at school. The boys, if they leave school at fifteen without any certificates, have got the rag trade, furniture trade or one of the breweries - I am not even sure that they can get into the breweries at fifteen. I think a lot of the boys swap and change pretty heavily but the thing is they don't like going far for their employment. The Youth Employment doesn't get much contact with the young people after they have left school. There's only a handful of them that will go back to them after they have lost their first job. That is because I don't think they are satisfied the first time around. You see, youth-employment people, school careers, I think they call it, they look at the jobs they have got, they know they've only got these jobs and that they have got to fill them somehow, whether they like it or not. Then I think they fall into the mistake of categorizing young people ... "Well, look don't be a fool, you know that's all you can do ..." and the young people either take it or leave it. A lot of young people, if they are failures at school, in that they have got no pleasure out of it and certainly no academic achievement, are after a bit more money than the youth employment can offer. They know they are not going to get the career-structured jobs and, to me, it is perfectly understandable that they are after the highest pickings that they can get from the word go.'

'I look out for the money always, don't mind what it is as long as the money is good.'

'You might get a job sweeping the floor and making the tea.'

'For twenty-five quid a week I would sweep the floor and make the tea.'

'Well, all your dignity's gone, 'asn't it?'

'I couldn't care less about me dignity, you can't live, eat and drink dignity.'

'I just want a trade so as I know I can get another job without much trouble.'

'Look at all these secure jobs, you 'ave to work like mad when you're young and 'ave plenty of money when you're forty odd ... what's the good of that?'

'The thing is that you 'ave to think about the future, when you're gonna get married. At the moment money is the most

important thing to me when looking for a job. After Christmas I am gonna start night school. Before Christmas everyone looks for a job with more money, people who 'aven't got a job look for one before Christmas just to see 'em over.'

'Liking a job is important when you are gonna stay in it but if you are only going to move on like, then it doesn't really matter ... cause you're only going to be there a couple of months. I don't think either you or me would sweep up the public toilets.'

'I couldn't work in a shop.'

'I couldn't sit at a desk all day, just writing letters and stuff like that.'

It appears from a sort of tough exterior that all they want out of work is how much they can get out of it materially, having little or no interest in the job that they are actually doing and any enjoyment from work would almost be a coincidence. Many of them, however, have discarded many of their own ambitions. Knuckler, for example, when asked why he didn't get a job working with animals, at first reacted quite cynically and then emotionally.

'There is nothing really stopping me. If I could get one I suppose I would but there ain't many of 'em up at the Labour Exchange and the zoos 'ave got so many years' waiting lists for zoo keepers and I 'aven't got enough brains to be a vet.'

'You really liked animals when you left school, how come you didn't try to get a job then?'

'I did, I did, but they said I weren't clever enough.'

'Yeah, but it ain't for them to say you ain't clever enough.'

'Well, the careers officer at my school advised me that I weren't brainy enough, that is what he is there for isn't it? All those jobs with animals start off with the shit, washing them or sweeping the shit and that. You don't work with the animals, you go through so they think you are dedicated to animals. If Dempsey (school teacher) had stayed on like, he was in charge of the animals, the rabbits, goldfish, budgies and all silly little rats and mice and things like that, and I suppose 'ad I stopped on there, I would 'ave got a job with animals because of the science bloke, he would 'ave ended up getting a job for me but

it didn't ... it ended ... when they knocked the school down.

Many of them blame the lack of qualifications and the need for further education as the main reason why they don't do the type of work that they would prefer.

'It's the training that puts me off.'

'It all depends on what the money is like when you are training. I would like to be a pilot - I'm only saying what I would like to be, but I would like to be a pilot. It's the qualifications, that's what stops me. To be a pilot you 'ave to 'ave "O"-levels and "A"-levels and then to college.'

'I'm training to be an electrician, with a five-year apprenticeship and the schooling worries me 'cause I'm not at all bright on maths. My maths is real bad sort of thing. I thought I might as well get a trade and that's the best trade to go for at the time. It's not a bad job. You 'ave a laugh and that. When I'm working in these offices, you get these snobs who look down on you because you're a bit scruffy. Them blokes ain't earning as much as a fully qualified electrician, those office jobs ain't that well paid. They're on a staff and they don't get paid for all their overtime.'

They are aware of the problems of unemployment, though they are not directly affected by it in London.

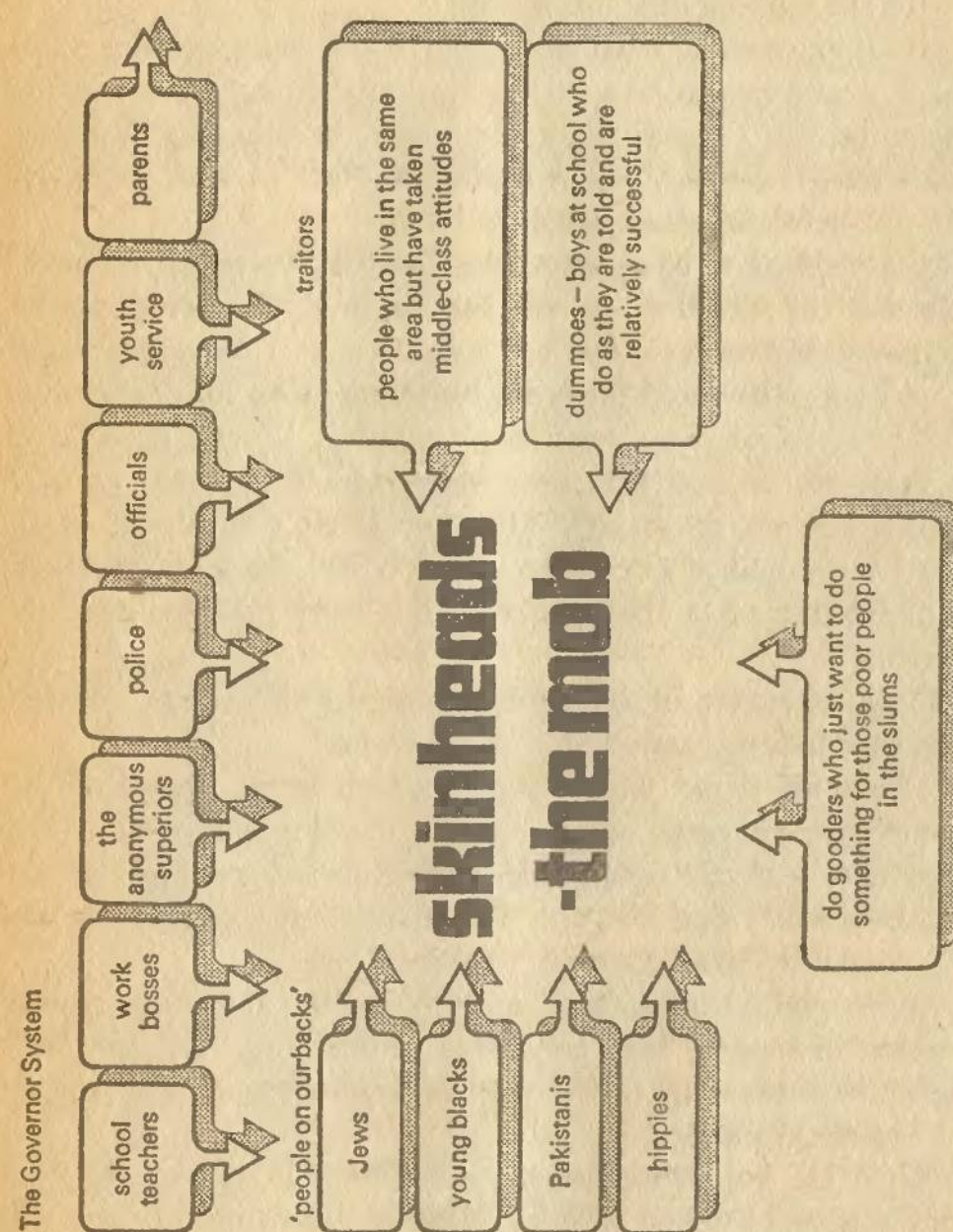
'There are some young people unemployed, they are the people who 'ave made up their minds that they are going to get themselves a decent job, while those slob up the road at the Youth-O won't find 'em one. If you get chucked out of a job like, you like to 'ave a couple of weeks off.'

'What about Sunderland and that area, there are people working in shops - they are taking people with "O" and "A" levels, they are taking people with the higher grades, everyone is out of work at sixteen.'

'What do you think of these Conservatives, why do you think they want to ban unions and things? Because they go mad 'cause they study with their brains to get their money and they think that people who work with their body like, people who 'ave to graft, shouldn't earn fuck all. They think that only brains should earn money, they don't think that these people deserve it. That is why they want to do the unions in.'

'You couldn't do without the unions though, could you?'

'YOU couldn't but the fucking Conservative MPs could.'



This graph was drawn by one of the gang members during the discussions which make up 'Bosses' chapter.

6 Bosses

'Everywhere there are fucking bosses, they're always trying to tell you what to do ... don't matter what you do, where you go, they're always there. People in authority, the people who tell you what to do and make sure you do it. It's the system we live in, it's the governor system.'

'The governors, they've got authority, they come down on you.'

'Schools, you 'ave to go, doncha? The teachers and the 'eadmaster, they're the authority, ain't they? They're telling you what to do and you're glad to get out and leave 'n that, aren't ya? But work's no different, ya got the bosses there, ain't ya? They think cause you're young and they pay you and that, that they can treat you how they like and say what they want. They think they're superior.'

'Yeah, there's a whole lot of superiors, ain't there ... they're like anonymous, ain't they, ya know what I mean. Like when you're in your working clothes, jeans and boots 'n that, then you get on a tube or bus or something, they look at you as if you was dirt, just cause they wear suits and things.'

'Then there's the "old bill" and courts ... they're all part of authority. Officials and all kinds of people in uniforms. Anyone with a badge on, traffic wardens and council and that ... yeah, even the caretaker at the flats, they even 'ave goes at you. Then when you finish at work or at school, you go to the club and the youth leaders are all just a part of it.'

'Your mother and father were the first type of authority. Some parents 'aven't got any authority when you get older but authority is anyone who's got power over you.'

There was considerable ambivalence about the role of the parents within the 'governor system'. A lot of this, of course, is caused by the individual's relationship with his own parents.

This was the only area where there wasn't common agreement within the group. Their ambivalence was endorsed by the fact that very often the parents would support them if they were in conflict with some other specific authority, such as the police.

'If in the newspaper it says about some kid being put away ... my mother says "poor little sod, I wonder how 'is people feel..." It's like her son's doing it ... "they're only boys and they're getting into this trouble ..." ya know what I mean, she thinks it's wrong, she don't believe in the boys going round 'itting people but she thinks of the kid as well because they're in the same boat as us.'

The parents have been left in the 'governor system' only because of the possibility of them acting as an authority over the young.

'All of these authorities are coming down on you all of the time, all the time 'aving goes. There's a whole group of other people, your own kind, who live in this area, who are traitors. They live in the same blocks of flats as you and in the same streets, they look down on us and they think they're fucking better than us. They're the type of people who grass you up, all these 'ave-a-go-merchants. Like this fellah who bought a paper off me dad's stall every night down the city. 'E always behaved as if 'e was a snob, ya know one of them geezers with a bowler 'at 'n brolly 'n that and we always thought 'e was some kind of snotty office worker. One night my dad was closing the stall and this geezer comes along, when dad gets on the train 'e sees 'im and when 'e gets off the tube 'e sees that 'e lives in the same flats as us. That's the type that thinks they're better than us but really they're just the same.'

'All these dummoes at school, who always do what they're told ... they're the ones who end up being coppers and that.'

'I hate them do-gooders who come to "'elp the poor in them slums..." They're all nice and sweet and kind, they pretend to be on your side and by talking nicely find out about you but social workers and people like that, they ain't on your side. They think they know how you should live. They're really authority pretending to be your friends. They try to get you to do things and if you don't do them, they've got the law on their side.'

'With all this lot against us, we've still got the yids, Pakis, wogs, 'ippies on our backs. They use us and live off us.'

'We're in the middle, ain't we, and what can we do? I'll tell you what we fucking do, we go Paki-bashing and 'ippie-bashing. The people at the top say it's our fault (Paki-bashing) and we should be tolerant to them. They class us in the same boat as them, yet we 'ave been 'ere for years and they 'ave just come 'ere. Why should we be tolerant to people that *they* have invited into the country? We didn't invite them. Like when we talk to the black man, they say "your ancestors put my ancestors to slaves". My ancestors was most probably starving 'ungry, worse than the slaves ... dying, it was Edward 'Eath's ancestors or someone who had the slaves. I couldn't afford to 'ave slaves if we were allowed to now.'

The mob used the four groups described as 'being on our backs' as scapegoats. The Jews were, for example, the most traditional scapegoats in the area. Dennis talked about this. 'I can almost remember never seeing a coloured man ... when the Jews were the enemy, behind their back. I very quickly lost the anti-semitic feeling. My parents were never anti-semitic, it just 'appened to be how you were. Everyone used to say it was all right for them. We used to think the Jews were rich because they owned the little corner shop.' The mob never actually attacked Jews, most of the Jewish population had moved out of the area anyway but they showed much contempt and hostility towards the Jewish bosses that they often had to work for or came in contact with.

'Ya know "Schnellwaters" down Whitechapel? I went in there for a salt-beef sandwich and I was getting mucked up and the woman said "are you mucking me about?" and I said no and this big fat greasy yid behind there ... and he said to the woman "the little schmuck's daft, don't serve 'im." I said "you, you big fat yid" and all these yids in there went ... (gasps of astonishment) and all their mouths opened as if I had committed a crime and I threw the salt-beef sandwich in 'is face ... he looked so ugly and fat. Ya ever been in there? Near Black Lion Yard?'

The Jewish population escaped physical attacks due to the fact that they were very often the employers and had therefore become respectable and less vulnerable.

Although the mob members had grown up with West Indian

friends and some West Indian boys had closely associated with or even been members of the mob, animosity grew when the West Indians behaved in a way that showed that they believed themselves to be equal to the white boys.

'Them blacks, them young blacks who we've grown up with, they'll pinch our birds and jobs and that, they're getting all flash and that.'

'Trouble is they think they're as good as we are.'

'Yeah, I went to a party the other week and when I asked a white bird to dance she said "come back when you're another colour. . . ." The dirty slag. See it's the birds that are making it worse.'

There was never any physical violence between the mob and the West Indians, this is perhaps because of the big build of the West Indians and also that the animosity seemed to be based on a conflict over the girls. However, on the whole, serious interest in girls did not exist until the mob itself began to break up.

It is the remaining two groups, the Pakistanis and the hippies, who were open to physical attacks by the mob. These attacks were rationalized by remarks such as:

'The Pakis, they are the worst. Make our area a slum; throw their shit in the street. You've got to admit they do stink.'

'Them dirty 'ippies, poncing off us all the fucking time. We 'ave to work and pay taxes and things, all these 'ippies are on the dole and don't do nothing and thief and that . . .'

The governor system as described by the mob seems to be consistent with some accepted views on the origins of violence

According to psychologists, aggressiveness results from chronic frustration of instinctual satisfactions. . . . If the frustrating agents are parents or vaguely identified authority responsible for social injustice, they are often too powerful or too remote for direct attack, and then the aggression tends to get displaced onto substitutes. Hence, the popularity of scapegoatism, especially members of racial minorities, as targets for seemingly wanton bullying.¹³

'By us working against each other, the people at the top are 'aving it easy. That is we are splitting ourselves, I know this, I know this well but I just can't bring myself to . . . 'ow can you bring yourself to 'elp the Pakis fight the top?'

13. *The Young Offender*, p. 202.

'I don't know, at least the blokes at the top are white, or most of 'em. Even coppers, if there's a race riot between blacks and whites, it's ten to one that they will nick the blacks and give 'em a kick-in, that's more likely than them nicking the white . . .'

'If the blacks and Pakis weren't 'ere we would fight amongst ourselves, the youth. Because there weren't blacks and Pakis up and coming when I was younger like, I was a mod and we used to go and fight the grease. Well, that's it, we'd go and fight with the grease and 'ippies, wouldn't we? Skinheads don't fight skinheads. There's always got to be someone who is the scapegoat.'

'There again, if there were no blacks and Jews and what-nots, you might be able to get everyone to fight against society, I mean I can't feel the same hate for a rocker as I can for a black.'

'I do, I always hate the people I fight. No youth would ever go against society, it will always be youth against youth.'

There tends to be a begrudging recognition of scapegoat groups very often having an equal status to themselves, or at least the coloured immigrant groups.

'White working-class attitudes the same as black power? Against society? Well, I suppose I am a bit. I think they're a bit more extreme though in the way they set about doing it, that's because they've got more people against them than the working-class man, don't they?'

'Like whereas the working class years ago would work for two pence, now they won't. Whereas you would 'ave starved to death, nowadays you wouldn't . . . go on the fucking dole. Even as you say with black power, if they was to 'ave brought blacks 'ere years ago, when it all started, they'd 'ave 'ad no black power.'

However, they don't see the hippies in the same way as they do the immigrant groups and in the end there appears to be more of a class issue than just scapegoatism.

'You look at 'ippies, wouldn't you think they were childish?'

'In some respects, yes.'

'Oh, yes silly as arse'oles.'

'Why are they silly as arse'oles? They don't go round beating Pakis up do they?'

'They are worse than skinheads in a way, you know 'ippies; they talk all love and that but they're real cunts underneath. It's

disease. The only things that I 'old against 'ippies, is that they don't work and they get national assistance and all that and they nick milk bottles off of door steps which people 'ave 'ad to work for.'

'Yeah, but skinheads do the same thing, John.'

'Yeah, but there was this 'ippie who was inside, I used to talk to 'im a lot ... 'e was a fucking nutcase. 'E believed free love and all this, no one should work. So I says "who's gonna grow the fucking crops then? to bake a loaf of bread and that, ya know, who is gonna work to produce the fucking food?" And 'e 'ad no answer for that, nothing. No they ain't got no answers for this; they believe that people should give you things and that.'

'Yeah, they fucking steal and all, they're nothing but a load of fucking thieves.'

'You notice that a lot of rich people turns 'ippie. They 'ave been spoilt. It's just to be the opposite of their parents, that's all it is. Their mum's got money and all this and they say "give your money away and all that".'

'They don't want the responsibility of life, it's too much. They want a free and easy life with an income coming in. They don't want to go their parents' way if their parents are posh. They don't wanna be posh; they want to be different. Don't you reckon it's just because they 'ave been spoilt?'

'Yeah, most of 'em. That is why I think 'alf of 'em go on national assistance.'

'Ippies are just plain revolting. They are reacting against society cause their own people are society. 'Ippies are just lazy no-good dropouts. They are only middle class, ya know them 'ippies come from mostly middle-class families. They are like someone who 'ates people who 'as got more than them and despises people who 'ave got less, ya know what I mean? They look down on us and they 'ate the people above.'

'They look down on us the same as their parents do. Most of 'em are posh ain't they? That's what middle class is. They 'ear a cockney accent and they say "skinhead" - it's obvious isn't it - Powell-mate-skinhead!'

It appears that many of the parents were equally as class conscious.

'When you talk with Sony, if you listen 'e just says what 'is parents say and when we said to 'im "You're working class like us" he said "I'm middle class ..." 'cause 'is dad told 'im 'cause 'is dad votes conservative.'

'Well, when I was thirteen at school, I thought because I wasn't a tramp or living in a slum, I thought that I was middle class, ya know. So I said to me mum "we're middle class" and she said "You fucking ain't ya know; middle class is snobs." And I didn't know. I thought because you wasn't a tramp you was middle class. Thought this because there was always people at school poorer than you. Yeah, there's always people poorer than you so you might be 'igher.'

They believe that there is a middle-class element developing in their area and see this as an intrusion on their basically one-class neighbourhood. These changes are not seen to be as something coming in from the outside but as a change amongst the working-class people themselves, the 'traitors'. This in turn is blamed on various environmental changes in the East End.

'The middle class comes out of building flats instead of little 'ouses, ya know what I mean?'

'What about that mob in Brick Lane? That new block of flats there, can't say they're middle class.'

'I'm just saying what middle classness comes out of. This lot, flats, not all people would say it this way. It's not actually middle class, it's people thinking that they are middle class. Well, they're just a lot of people that think they're better, that's all they are. But they've taken on middle-class attitudes.'

'I think you will find more working-class people drifting towards middle class with the sort of wage increases there 'as been.'

Attitudes that they consider to be middle class they see as being in direct conflict with their working-class values.

'Like middle class 'ate high class because they 'ave got more and they don't wanna mix with the lower class and despise them because they 'ave got less and they think they are not fit to be with. So the middle class, whereas the rich don't care about the poor and the poor don't care about the rich, the middle class 'ates anybody, even theirselves. See, they're trying to keep up with the Joneses, 'cause the people next door got a colour television,

'n they 'ave only got a black and white one, they go out and get a colour one. Then they find out the one next door cost a 'undred pounds more and they will 'ave the needle with their neighbour. Whereas if you bought a colour television, I wouldn't 'ate you, I would come over and watch it. You're laughing but it's true. The working class mix with theirselves and the upper class mix with theirselves. The middle class are arse-'ole crawlers.'

'I 'spose there must be some sort of community feeling among the 'igher class, not as much as there is amongst the working class but perhaps it's there, not like in the middle class – they're so insecure, they are neither one thing or another and they never get to be. They're just in a sort of vacuum, a void, a space.'

7 Immigrants

Scapegoating is probably the most common form of ideology focused on the causes of the strain. Scapegoating is the displacement of blame for frustration from the true cause into a person or persons, a group or groups, who have little or nothing to do with the frustration. For scapegoating to occur, some, at least, of the scapegoaters must be unaware of the irrationality and injustice of what they are thinking and doing. They, as well as the scapegoats, must be the victims of ideology. These victims – the scapegoaters themselves – may or may not also be the victims of propagandists who are deliberately deceiving them in order to mobilize or divert their energies.

...in every case one should also seek to understand both the susceptibility of the audience to the distorted ideas and the vulnerability of the scapegoat. These are related. The selection of a scapegoat is not determined by its weakness alone; the scapegoat is always SYMBOLICALLY connected with the frustrations of the scapegoaters.¹⁴

'You 'ave no doubt 'eard the expression "Levy, 'e's all right, 'e's one of your own." That's the greatest thing that can be said of yer, which means that you're an East Londoner, you're one of the pack but I've never 'eard it said of a coloured fellah. I don't know any East Londoner who would say it, except perhaps a very young one who gets along now and 'as grown up with coloured boys. Of my age and older certainly no, never call any coloured person one of your own, cause they're not.' Dennis's statement, which is a common adult attitude in East London, is echoed by members of the mob.

'I mean, if you see one of them coloured blokes, you wouldn't say "there's a cockney, or there's a Londoner" ... 'e's a black man or, if you're not prejudiced, you'd say "there's a coloured gentleman". You don't say Londoner or nothing like that, it's just a coloured man.'

¹⁴ *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, ed. D. Sills, Macmillan and Free Press, 1968.

'You can't make old people tolerate them 'cause they *can't*.'

The East End has, and is facing, vast upheavals during the redevelopment, and the community cohesiveness is being greatly disrupted. Yet there is still a sense of East End-Cockney identity. An identity which is not lightly bestowed on people without a history of living in the area. Many Jewish people have been adopted as 'one of your own' but only after many years. The blacks have encroached in the area and have not been accepted as East Londoners, the Pakistanis have also moved into the area. There is a fear that the blacks and Pakis will 'take over the area', will help to destroy the East End's identity, even more than it has already been destroyed. Then there is the chance that the immigrants will only use the East End as a temporary home and then will rise up the social ladder.

'Londoners will move away, I reckon that's true. Englanders are moving to Australia. Well I can see the niggers taking over the East End.'

'There's a lot of people against them.'

'Of course, we resent them.'

'Still, the Jews never took over the East End, did they really 'cause they moved out of the East End when they got rich ... went out and up. That's how the blacks will go.'

'They go up, they won't stay in the East End.'

'I won't go into one of their shops, with all the Pakis. Now say I was on my way to work and I wanted some fags, I wouldn't take no notice of 'em. I would just go in and buy some but I wouldn't go into an area that's full of them shops; but if ya see just one in a different area, it don't bother ya.'

'I don't care about saying 'ello to a black bloke but if there are 'undreds of 'em I don't wanna know.'

Immigrant groups seem to be a basic threat to the mob. Their fear is such that they will not happily enter alone a predominantly immigrant part of the East End. Derek Cox said while discussing race relations in the area, 'If you look at the living circumstances of the Pakistanis and their neighbours, I would be very surprised if there were not a conflict of some sort because of the overcrowding and the visual evidence of a take-over by an alien culture. Just getting used to the Jewish shops, which after all took a long time - the Jews took a lot of stick,

getting used to them and then finding that their (Jewish) shops and businesses are being taken over by another alien community, the Pakistanis. It really shows two things of the people who live there: that they are failures twice over in that they 'aven't got the initiative to do the things that these immigrant people are doing. So obviously there will be violence and a lot of prejudice from this point of view.' Whether or not the prejudice is caused through a sense of failure on the part of the whites is open to question but the Collinwood tended to suspect that the immigrants would move up the socio- and economic ladder at *their* (the mob's) cost.

These fears are perhaps understandable but are essentially unresolved. Are these what makes the 'audience' susceptible to the 'distorted ideas'? Where do they get their ideas and so-called statistics from?

The mob will constantly come to this kind of conclusion as long as their own lives are frustrated by lack of opportunity to develop their full potential. The previous chapter pinpoints the pressures which the mob sees. Maybe the institutions prefer people to be scapegoats, than for the institutions to change according to the needs of the people.

'The whites took over South Africa and the blacks are trying to take over 'ere, so we 'ave to stop 'em 'ere.'

'There are only one and a half million blacks (in Britain) and in eight years they will be 50 per cent of the population ... how many are coming over 'ere illegally? Forty a day? There must be.'

'They bring diseases and they bring smallpox, cholera over.'

'What will they do in years to come? They're gonna take us over and sling us back to their countries, with a few of us left 'ere and they will rule the country.'

'They are taking our jobs.'

'Listen there are more plasterers that are wogs down our place than there 'as ever been.'

'Listen, there are 700,000 people unemployed (9 November 1970), there are a million and a 'alf wogs 'ere, there must be at least 600,000 of them at work, right? So if you got rid of all of them the rest of the people would 'ave a job, wouldn't they?'

Incredible assumptions and generalizations are made about

blacks and Asians, illustrating their belief that they are just 'uncivilized savages', and inferring that they are inferior to whites.

'If you was one of them wogs who come from one of them countries where you don't get much to eat, when you got over here, and even though you might be living in a slum what was in a bad condition, it would be better than living in India. And even though you only got about £4 a week it was more than you got in India. It would be like a holiday to you. Other people around you would be saying "poor fuckers living in a dirty old house, fourteen to a room ..." it's a 'oliday to 'em, they like it.'

'Even Michael X, when he was on the telly, he said "cause you say it is filthy for us to be together, that doesn't mean my people ain't 'appy like that. Same as when you came out to the jungle to us and said we will make you civilized and believe in God, we was happy like that." That is the same type of thing, they are over 'ere and they are 'appy like that, but it will fucking cause disease won't it?'

'When these whites first went over there they didn't take great armies with them to bring them back as slaves. Little boats went over there with men and they went up to these chiefs and said "we give you beads" and all this fucking bollox and you give us fucking men. They sold their own people, their own colour.'

'They sent a lot of relief to Pakistan didn't they? Yer, what makes me laugh is that we are sending all the stuff and the Indians are stopping it from getting through. Why do all these races fight against each other? The Indians killed some Pakis the other day. ... What's it matter, it lessens the population!'

'The world doesn't seem to care much about it though. I'll tell you something. America is under more pressure. If the Americans do something it is out everywhere. The Americans this and the Americans that, even from the Western people. But with them they don't get much criticism, 'cause everyone says they are only savages - that they don't know no better.'

These kinds of ideas reinforced, or possibly even induced, by the Western division of the world into civilized-uncivilized, developed-undeveloped nations, and the belief that poverty is inferiority. Believing all of this, they are left with the consolation

that no matter how poor you are as a white, you are always better off than the blacks. To be identified with blacks in any way undermines their belief in their social superiority.

'The blacks are not 'urting me, no ... they are 'urting other people though ... they are living next door to them.'

The selection of a scapegoat is not determined by its weakness alone; the scapegoat is always SYMBOLICALLY connected with the frustrations of the scapegoaters.¹⁵

'We're being exploited, the working class. It is 'ard for us to fight for our job and our 'ouse but with them 'ere as well, trying to get our 'ouses, it's another opposition. I'll tell you another thing, when you stand next to these people that 'ave just come over 'ere, they fucking stink and I couldn't stand it.'

'If I go into a shop or something and there are 'undreds of 'em in there, they make me sick because they smell, their food and their bodies. The same as if I went abroad I couldn't live in India. I don't think you could, you would die the same as all our soldiers who live out there. They must 'ave died of every disease there was.'

'I'm thinking of years to come like. Say I get married and I 'ave children, now when they go out, if they run round 'ere, there are gonna be 'undreds of blacks and one of my daughters might go with a black person. Now it just might be instinct with me but I cannot stand a black bloke! They look like monkeys with their big fucking noses, going about with a white bird on their arm - that is a disgrace! I couldn't 'ave it. I would kick 'er over the balcony and 'im as well, both of 'em. That's it, mate, I'm telling ya.'

'I see them going into the betting offices and putting pounds and pounds on. I can only put a couple of bob on, why should they be able to? At least the fucking rich are white.'

'Our headmaster used to only take on whites in the school and 'e fucking got the sack ... while Montefiore wouldn't take on whites, they took mainly who they felt sorry for, a fucking dumb Pakistani - they would take 'im but they wouldn't take in a university graduate. I'll bet in my school we had more Pakistani and Indian teachers than we 'ave got Pakistani and Indian kids.'

¹⁵. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

'Yeah, it was really silly in our school. The white kids was teaching the Paki teachers to speak English. All black teachers must be bad 'cause they can't speak fucking English.'

'I'd rather 'ave one of the old Salmon and Ball blokes in a boiler suit teaching me than a Paki. At least I would understand 'im, ya can't even make communication with a Paki.'

'I went into a CSE class and there was an Indian and because they was all Indians, I only went in there for a day and they was a year 'igher than me, but 'e 'ad to look after us because there was no teachers. We went into the CSE and there was a lot of Indian kids in there, see, they was like immigrants, and the teacher was saying "you eat with a knife and a fork". This may sound ridiculous to you but on my mother's life, this is the truth. He was drawing on the board, "this is a fork and can you go up to the board and tell me what you do with this fork and about eating habits." Well, who wants to learn about that? We was rolling up. There was other people in the class - he was bringing down the intelligence of the whites in the class.'

The members of the mob are in conflict. Their hostility towards immigrants is real and often obsessional and their fears and frustrations lead them to certain conclusions about immigrants. At the same time, however, there is an initial recognition that they may be playing out the role of the scapegoater, instead of identifying the real causes of their personal frustrations.

'These Conservative people that brought them blacks over to exploit them, they didn't say that they'd come and live in the big 'ouses with them. No, they live with us, the poor people, who never 'ad no slaves, who was worse off than the slaves. So therefore we should do away with the ones who brought 'em 'ere. We don't want 'em 'ere. Did we exploit 'em? We never, *they* exploited 'em. The Jews 'ave made it and are with the Conservatives. If the blacks was given a few more years, they'll get to the top with the Conservatives.'

'The whites, the English, that are already at the top, there is only a small minority of 'em but they're there. Then you got the Jews coming over. Now the Jews that are poor and can't get nowhere are down 'ere with us. But there's the Jews that are rich; now they don't call up their own nationality with 'em, they just look after themselves. Then the blacks come over. Now that

the blacks are with the rich whites and Jews, are saying "we're better than you". Now it's whites, blacks and Jews at the top and whites, blacks and Jews at the bottom.'

'Yeah but I would rather be pushed about by a white man than a black man. I don't wanna be pushed about at all but I 'aven't got much choice.'

'Yeah, and then there's gonna be them rich Indians over 'ere, running businesses . . . not the poor, the poor are gonna be left in India. So all the Indians that are coming over 'ere are gonna end up at the top with 'em.'

'If you 'ave a black policeman to deal with a black crowd, he will fucking do it worse than a white one. When you see the American police, the black ones there are fucking bashing the black ones' heads in. They want to show an example, they want to show they are as good as you because they are being brought down all of the time for being black. They want to try and prove that they are not black. They will turn Conservative and all the rest of it. Makes me laugh about these other countries though, their own leaders exploit them as much as we do. But when the black leaders take over, they don't go against the whites, they go against their own people. That's the same as our leaders going against our working class but our leaders tell us that it is the blacks that are going against us, the same as their leaders tell them that it is us. While it is really their leaders all the time.'

As to the practical solution to the 'racial' problem, there were several conflicting ideas.

'Without 'urting 'em, put 'em on a nice plane and send 'em 'ome.'

'The solution is to move about. People like us should go to South Africa, shouldn't we? What do you think everyone keeps emigrating to South Africa for?'

'We want white rule, we want white supremacy, right?'

'No, we want a white England. Do you want a black slave?'

'No, I just want 'em to go 'ome.'

'We need the Chinese to take over 'ere, ya don't see no blacks in China. That's what we need - a Chinese Enoch Powell.'

'Do you think it's right for us to allow them to come over 'ere if we haven't got the right facilities to look after 'em? I don't. You shouldn't allow them over until you've got the right facili-

ties to look after 'em. Well it's not fair to them and it's not fair to us.'

'Yeah, but that's too late now, they've all been mixing in. Say like half-castes and quarter-castes, what do you do with them? It'll end up like South Africa going round people's 'ouses saying "you've got a bit of black in you mate". No, I wouldn't like to see that.'

'We ought to do it right now, every full black should go.'

'It's like policemen in the papers, they say that it's only the minority of police that is bad. That ain't true, it's the majority that is bad.'

8 Violence

Involvement in, and discussion of, various acts of violence, was one of the main characteristics of the group behaviour. Violence was not the prime function of the group but was one of the main means of relieving boredom and, in certain situations, frustrations. It was one of the most available forms of excitement. The mob didn't see themselves to be any different from the rest of the community in its attitude towards physical violence.

There were limitations to the situations and to the forms of violence that the mob was involved in. These would include violence that takes place going to and at the grounds, and the leaving of football matches. This would mainly be directed at rival supporters, British railway property and officials. Another situation of violence was conflict with other groups of youths in youth clubs, pubs, cafés, dance halls, etc. To a certain extent this would include territorial rivalries. The other main violent situation was attacks on scapegoats.

The majority of the violence took place as a part of a group activity and was very seldom a planned activity, most often spontaneous. This didn't stop the gang from searching out provocative situations, looking for 'aggro'. Fights were planned on occasion when they wanted to seek revenge for acts taken against a member of their mob by another group. Very few members of the mob actually carried weapons on them all of the time, such as razors, sharpened metal combs or knives. The majority of weapons used in a confrontation were makeshift things collected at the site or on the way to the confrontation itself. Although there were at times members of the mob who were engaged in apparently unprovoked acts of violence or who would have, on their own, attacked certain scapegoats, this

behaviour was seen by the majority of the mob as being abnormal.

'Don't say that you'd run down Brick Lane punching Pakis on your jack.'

'You ask 'im, I used to go and do it on me jack.'

'You went and done it on your own? What's the matter with you?'

'When you got some long stick in your 'and and you are bashing some Paki's face in, you don't think about it.'

The mob saw violence as a necessity and an inevitability, though not always desirable.

'It is a necessary thing. It is a necessary evil, fighting, really ain't it? 'Cause I don't know many people who would let someone 'ave a go at 'im without putting up a fight and those who do must be stupid... at least I don't think much of 'em.'

'You can go out looking for a fight though, can't you? But if you go looking for it, you're bound to find it wherever ya live.'

'If ya don't go looking for violence ya don't necessarily bump into it, unless ya go to a violent place.'

'That means ya 'ave to stay indoors.'

'Yeah but what if you're walking down the road and somebody 'as goes at ya and you don't do nothing, you must be a bit spineless, mustn't you, seriously? 'Cause if I was walking along on me own, or in a bar on me jack like I was in Tottenham bar when about twelve blokes 'ad a go at me, I still turned round and 'ad a go at 'em. It was just pure luck that they didn't all jump me and cut me to pieces.'

The necessity for violence is more understandable when seen in context of the male role as being dominant and aggressive, and anything less is seen as being effeminate and 'spineless'.

'The role of a man is to be domineering and violent. In the eyes of 'is son 'e does but in the eyes of 'isself, a bloke would rather be quiet. It is the male instinct to be dominant over the bird.'

'I can't see ya marrying a bird and then when you're walking along the road with 'er, ya wouldn't let no one 'ave a go at 'er. Even if you get a 'iding you still 'ave to stick up for your maleness and the bird knows. Say you sat there and they says "you dirty ole whore" and you don't say nothing, she is bound not to speak to you again or pack you up or something. If you turn

round and 'ave a go at them and get a good kicking and they bust your face up and everything, she will still like you for what ya done.'

'You get a lot of people who can take an insult and then all of a sudden they just turn round vicious like. You can say an insult about 'im sometimes and then sometimes 'e turns round vicious and 'e will fly off 'is rocker. I've seen it a lot of times. I call 'im a fat cunt lots of times and 'e 'as never done nothing and then one week at football I said something about Martin Chivers and 'e 'ad a go at me.'

'That's another trouble see. Say you're out, all 'appy and someone says something, you say "bollox"... then you might go out and you 'ave the 'ump over something and they say something and you 'it 'im. That's it. It's all according to what mood. You can't be of one frame of mind all your life or you'd be a cabbage.'

The distinction between verbal violence and physical violence is seen almost as a class issue and they recognize that people in other parts of London may be shocked by their physical violence.

'If Knuckler was to go to the West End and someone said so and so 'ad a go at Knuckler, they'd all be shocked but round 'ere if someone said so and so called Knuckler a cunt, they'd go ha-ha-ha-ha and then Knuckler "grabbed 'is 'ead and put it through the wall", they'd laugh more at that, ya know what I mean. The bloke would be lower 'cause 'e got 'it, whereas the other side of town ya wouldn't 'it 'im.'

'You take these people, as you say from up the West End, they take it if they give someone a bolloxying, it is equivalent to you giving someone a right 'iding. They do it with words, make them feel small and all that. You know if it is a person who fights against... say, someone who is educated, you know the person who fights is going to give 'im a right 'ander but if it is between two, what they call educated people, it is the one who can make the other one feel the smallest. It's an argument. It's still as much 'aving a go at each other.'

'People can be just as violent with words as with action depending on who they're talking to. If someone 'ad a go at 'im with words, it won't 'urt 'im - 'e'd 'it 'im.'

'I'd prefer someone slag me down rather than give me a right pasting, 'cause once they've said it you've forgot about it.'

'You can always answer it by a right 'ander, then again if you do you might turn round and be called a chicken. If someone says to you "oy, you big cunt", it don't 'urt you. In a sense I wouldn't give 'em a dig if they slag me down, just that I'd rather be slagged down than 'ave me 'ead punched in.'

'Yeah but then your mates might turn round and say "oy, you idiot why didn't ya 'it 'im when 'e called you a cunt?"'

An incident which happened in a pub outside of their normal 'territory' is a good example of how tension is developed because they appeared to be taking over the pub for the night and the actual fighting was caused by a girl insulting a member of the mob.

'Me and a couple of the others started going up to the Foresters regular. It's in Surrey Docks, like a discotheque pub. It's outside of our jurisdiction but we went there anyway. It was suggested to us by Miller because 'e used to go to the Apples and Pears, which was well-known and then he went in there to try it out and 'e said it was all right. So, we started going up there and we started drinking there a couple of us and we made friends with a lot of people from Bermondsey, and we used to go to parties and it used to be okay. In fact, they was a bit scared of us, people used to put the name of Stepney about and they was frightened of the name. Then one night we went up there, four or five of us. Then all of a sudden Knuckler comes bowling into the door, out of a car and then all different mobs, like Ray and all different people, started coming in from all our lot who had like come down to see what it was like. There was a lot of us in there and we was all drinking and that and I s'pose the other kids must 'ave 'ad the needle because we was the biggest lot in there, we'd took over the pub. And then Miller tried to pick up a bird and the bird took the piss out of 'im 'cause over there everyone was like a real 'ippie wierdo and Miller had short hair and still thought 'e could pull a bird and they took the piss out of 'im. So Miller decided to 'ave a go at 'er and 'er boyfriend tried to stop it like and Miller decided to 'ave a go at 'im.

'So, then all of the mob came out and we was outside, and we says to 'em "leave it out" and so they thought we must be

idiots, ya know, to bottle out of it. So then the one that Miller 'ad a go at first, picks up a bottle and says "I'm gonna do you anyway", he put 'is glass down and went over to Miller. Miller swung round and missed 'im and fell on the floor, 'e jumps up and 'its 'im. The kid gets up and runs away and we shout "Don't let 'im get away with it, Miller". So Miller chases 'im about two mile down the road until 'e catches 'im. 'E brought 'im back by the 'air, made 'im beg 'is bird back and made 'em both cry ... and 'e said 'is mum was in 'ospital and 'is dad was in prison.

'Then 'is mates, during that time that Miller run up the road or just before that, a few of 'is mates tried to jump me, and Knuckler threw a couple off and then one of 'em has a go at you with a bottle and said "I'm gonna have a go at you, you cunt." So Miller 'ad a go at 'im and then I just see the kid running with blood all pouring down 'is face. Then a load of 'em come out and Willy was 'itting you and everyone was running and shouting ... I see Pricey kicking one of 'em up against a wall.

'He must 'alf 'ave 'ad some bottle that Max, 'cause all of his mates run away and 'e still came out of the Foresters and started 'itting people. They ripped 'is shirt off and started kicking 'im in the face and you know how when you get kicked in the face you start moaning and ... well, 'e just sort of said nothing at all. Just up against the wall like this with 'is arms up and they was kicking 'im.

'Then after that like we all shot away, everyone split up. Some went away in the car and some went back to pull birds and I went with Willy down to a chip shop ... we was in there with Miller and a white car pulled up and this man says "I'm gonna kill you." A man about thirty, bald and all that and a bird and a few mates. Next I sees Miller run into the bushes and the bloke is just about to get out of the car, a brick come just over from the bushes and it went BOOM right on the car ... so he pissed away down the road and Miller's going "aw, you poor cunt" but since I was pissed I just thought nothing of it and I walked in the same way as the car and went into the chip shop with Willy.

'So when we came out of the shop we started walking down the road and the car came past again, and it started coming up

and I looked at the car and there were two motor bikes behind it and I said "Willy we had better run" and 'e's a footballer see and 'e can outrun me and so we turned round and started running... first 'e's behind me and all of a sudden he went whizzzz. ... We ran across this road and I can just feel this sort of wind behind me and the two motor bikes are trying to knock us down and they went into a side turning into a car... I couldn't run no further and thought everyone 'ad gone 'ome, I didn't know they was all waiting for me at the bottom of the hill. So, Willy runs to the bottom of the hill where the others was and he was okay. He thought I'd run down a side turning but I 'ad run into the chip shop and the chip man slammed the door in me face and said get away, my wife has got a hole in her heart or something... I pushed the door in and as I went in I fell down on me face and then someone got hold of me leg and dragged me along the floor and I was kicking. Then I got a kick, the foot went just under me eye, so I 'eld me face... then I felt something hit me up the bollox and they just kicked me arse 'ole in and it was just full of bruises and I was going "No, leave me alone, it weren't me" and they kept kicking me and then they said cut 'im up and they let me go. Someone was saying to me "get up, get up". I was on the floor 'olding me 'ead. Then I 'eard 'em say "Cut 'im". I 'eard them get bottles from a crate and smash 'em. I shit myself and I jumped to me feet and slammed the door and put me foot at the bottom of it. Not that that would make much difference, the bloody place was made of glass.

'The next minute I heard a big shout going up "ORRR-RAYYYY". The street was full of people running and the car pulled away... I came out, they was all coming down, the mob was all coming down the road... Pricey, me brother, Ray, everyone. Then we all piled back to the station. We wanted to know who the baldy bloke was so we could do 'im over. Two of the kids who we had done over was with us and they was saying they didn't know who 'e was. They was already well done... one 'ad 'is arm all bandaged up and this wilkey-eyed one was saying "Leave it out, leave it out" over and over... "leave it out, leave it out, leave it out..."

'What about them Arsenal blokes at the pub. I thought that they was going to help them. One of 'em, he was standing there

watching when you stabbed a bloke in the eye and he said "oh you really go to town, don't yer?"

'We went down there the next week without Knuckler... Knuckler had a twenty-first. Knuckler bottled it, he won't fight on 'is birthday, 'e's very religious about 'is birthday. So we went down there the next week and I wanted to get this bloke with the bald head and the ones that beat me up. We got down there and all of the kids, Fussey's mates, said we ain't gonna fight. They says it's all right, no one's gonna 'ave a go at yers, just 'ave a drink. So we was all in groups of fours having drinks. But of course they had all brought their big brothers - the dwarfs with the beards - and they 'ad a car over the road all tooled up and bottled up. I went outside with Miller. I reckins that if we 'ad all come outside together we could 'ave beat 'em but we went out, me and Miller, Pricey and Graham. So Miller saw them loading bottles into the car and said "you, you cunt" and ran into the road. So they all came out and one had a starting handle in 'is 'and... Graham pulled Miller and said don't be silly. They came over and started talking and one of them took a swing at Miller and missed and Miller went WHIZZZZ straight down the road. Graham went after 'im. Then one of 'em gave Pricey a right 'ander and 'e went down the road. I didn't want to happen what happened the week before, so I backed out... I backed into the pub doorway while they threw bottles at me. As I went in the door the rest of 'em went out another door and started getting it.

'We had some weapons in Paul's car but he wouldn't let us get them out. Biggo's got a 'ammer but one of them got it off of him and about ten of 'em gave 'im a kicking.'

'Oh well, at least the second time everyone turned up. They all rallied round... even if we did get beat up.'

The situation itself had many of the symptoms which would be characteristic of a typical conflict situation between groups of youths. The mob recognized that the pub was outside of their 'jurisdiction'. They knew very well that they were helping to cause the situation by the way that people, like Knuckler, came 'bowling' (swaggering) into the pub. By their numbers they had taken over the pub but what was important was their attitudes in believing that they were in control. They weren't blind

to the way that this would affect the local youths in the pub, 'the other kids must have had the needle because we was the biggest lot in there'. The conflict was ultimately caused by the girl taking the piss out of Miller. Although this was the actual incident which started the fighting, the atmosphere was such that a fight was inevitable anyway. Did Miller try to chat up the girl purely as an act of provocation anyway?

9 Football and Violence

All the members of the Collinwood with few exceptions were ardent football supporters. Most followed Spurs though a few supported West Ham and Millwall. Some of these dissenters changed their allegiance because of group pressure though others like James were respected because of their adherence to their own team.

Football played a very important part in everyone's life, both the supporting of teams like Spurs and the playing of football at the Collinwood and Weavers Fields. Everyone was very knowledgeable about their team, its history, the past and present players and the content and results of particular games. They were all what could only be described as 'core supporters'.

'We used to wear boots and colours.'

'Pyjama jackets and things like that.'

'Ice-cream coats with Spurs written all over it. I had a blue jumper with a picture of Franky Saul on the back.'

'Yer, but there weren't no mucking about with fighting, was it.'

'No, no not so much.'

'The first trouble that I can remember, I was up the Paxton Road. This was when you know the fighting was first starting I suppose an' I was still goin' the Park Lane End, yer know. I see the supporters half each side, you know and I see a fight, and see 'em all start going, you know, tumble down, like fall on the floor and big gaps opening up and fights. There wasn't many police down there to start with. You used to see the occasional copper run in, drag 'em out and then more coppers would run to that spot.'

'Then it just got worse and worse.'

It is widely suggested that the 'soccer hooligan' is a fringe element among the supporters, that the 'hooligan is not a supporter' at all, but a thug, a rowdy who has come to the game

only for the punch up, having no interest or identification with the game at all. The Collinwood who made up much of the Park Lane End at Spurs contradict these assumptions.

Certainly the Collinwood were involved in fighting at football matches, but this can almost be seen as an extension of the game which was being played on the pitch. The Collinwood made up part of a group of the Tottenham Hotspur supporters known as the Park Lane, the name coming from the end of Spurs' ground where they stand. All the other teams have their equivalent of the Park Lane End, the Shed at Chelsea, the Trent End at Nottingham Forest and the Kop at Liverpool. The 'Home End' is defended from invasion by supporters of the opposing team. When going to away matches the defending team's 'End' is invaded or 'Taken', thus giving rise to chants and wall writing such as 'We took Stoke', 'We took the Kop'.

'When you played a team like from up North or that, they used to leave the night before, or early in the morning and get down there before us. They would get in the Park Lane, and you would get so many of 'em that they would take up all the Park Lane space, so that when the Tottenham supporters come they couldn't get in and the only way to get in was to fight 'em. To fight your way through. It was usually the big clubs, wasn't it, like Liverpool and Manchester, Leeds and teams like that, no one silly like Ipswich.'

'We used to go down the Shelf, and when we come out, we used to go out in a clink like and all run together and run down the street and if there was any supporters there we used to just trample over their heads or something.'

'Then it went down the Park Lane. The first game I can remember down the Park Lane with a big fight was Bristol City, when they had them razors. No there was about five blokes up there with razors and they were cutting all Bristol City supporters up. I can remember that, that was the first time that the Park Lane went into action. Then it started getting a bit more. . . . We started going to away matches.'

'You used to get more of it up North, 'cause they didn't like Londoners and you was always guaranteed a fight up North. I don't think I have ever been up North where you can sort of . . . You can't just walk about.'

'You know up North you can't just walk about, you 'ad to go in a mob.'

'I've tried it so many times. I tried it with you at Wolves and fourteen of 'em wanted to 'ave a straightener with the two of us.'

'Then there was the one where Freddy was up at Everton. Me and Freddy went to Everton. They was chasing us on a bus, right, and coincidentally the bus broke down, and Freddy was at the top of the stairs.'

'They seem to smell yer, they seem to smell yer don't they?'

'I mean I can smell them a mile off.'

The conflict constantly overflows from the football ground on to the streets, buses and trains, when the opposing teams of supporters come in contact with each other.

'Yer what 'appened to me, I went to Wolves but I got separated from the other crowd, you know, and there was a . . . one at the station and one at the market and I went to the station, and I was on me own. I was walking along, thought I would meet 'em at the station. A big mob of Wolves supporters was coming and, er, they said "look 'e's a Cockney." "You can tell by 'is hair." We was skinheads and they was greasers, you know and they said "'E's one over there." Well they came over.'

'The most fights that a mob ever 'ad was at Manchester, wa'n't it, Johnny, terrifying down there, wa'n't it? Mind you when we run 'em down the station they didn't know what day it was. But coming back from the game, what about me, I was on me own. I come back on the bus and I was up the top on me own sitting there with about thirty Man. City supporters. The bus conductor said "What der yer want?" I says "Free Please" (in a Manchester accent). You know, I just 'ad to do it and then all of a sudden I sees millions of 'em come down the road. When I get off the bus they was all walking along beside me and I didn't know what to do. I thought that they was bound to 'ave a go at me any minute and I . . . just got to shoot for the nearest drain hole or something. But I just walked down the station, everywhere I went I see sky blue, that was their colours, and they was saying "where's those Cockney bastards" and all this. I just didn't know what to do. Then I see some dope from Tottenham and we got on a train and shot 'ome.'

'What about Carthy, Ian Carthy. I went to the toilet up there and 'e followed me. 'E followed me in there, listen, and I says "What's the matter?" 'E says "Nothing" I was sitting in the toilet 'avin a shit and all 'e keeps saying was "You still there, you still there." I says "What's the matta?" 'E says "You goin' out yet?" I say "Go away from me for fuck's sake." I says "Go out, go on, go an' fight Man. City on your own." 'E was absolutely shittin' 'e's self.'

It can be very frightening and dangerous to be a lone supporter at an away match. But with a mob there is the opportunity for greater excitement. The mob can search out conflict and get a sense of achievement and develop personal and group status, at least in their own eyes.

'I tell you another fact, whenever we was in a mob, you know just ten or twelve it was always better, than when you was with all the Tottenham supporters or on yer own. I remember Stoke, there couldn't 'ave been twenty of us, we was walking about on our own and there was the fucking whole of Stoke waiting there. We says "Right" and we just run at 'em, I'm not kidding, they just all ran, they was falling over their self, beating each other up, to try and get away. There was literally 'undreds of 'em. They just ran, there was so many of 'em yet. . . . We went into the Stoke End and there was 'ardly any of us like, inside the ground. We 'ad police all round yer. When we got outside the ground, you know there couldn't 'ave been twenty of us, well we knew everyone who was there . . . people was more scared of running away than running at 'em. We literally just run out and they literally shit their self, we just kept running to the station. I'm not kidding they was running and 'iding.'

When the Collinwood first came to the Paint House trips to away matches were organized. Travel to the away town was by coach or van. This was to avoid the trouble and the expense of travelling by British Rail. The first one of these was the first match of the season between Leeds and Tottenham Hotspur.

'Well about two months before we went we arranged it. It was the first match of the season, to arrange it took so long, didn't it? By the Friday night we managed to get the money for hiring the coach. We 'ad a whip round or something. On the Friday night we stayed round the Paint House. Saturday

morning the coach was supposed to be there at 8 a.m., it never come until 9 a.m. All Friday night we was painting the banners, they were still wet Saturday morning. At 6 a.m. we were outside the Paint House practising and playing football. Anyway eventually the coach came. We 'ad the roof open and was sitting on it and we got pulled up by the police. We couldn't have gone a quarter of a mile. We went from the Paint House to the Blind Beggars and got pulled up. Then we see some more supporters and picked them up and put them on the coach. Then we was going along the road and we got picked up by the police loads of times. In the end the driver got a ticket for us all being on the roof. It couldn't 'ave been for speeding we could only go 30 miles an 'our. Anyway eventually we got there, it was five to three and we pulled up outside the ground and everyone just jumped out of the roof. Literally threw the banners out and we all marched round. We told the coach driver to meet us at seven o'clock at the Leeds Central station.'

'We went in the ground and we 'ad a punch up, we got in the middle of 'em, didn't we.'

'We walked in there and, there was some dirty great big massive bloke, and every time someone walked 'e kneed 'em, didn't 'e? Well I looked at 'im and thought "'ALLO, 'ALLO, 'ALLO, you can knee me any time you want and I won't do anything." But Biggo silly bastard, the geezer, just sort of like kneed 'im and Biggo went bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp-bomp - and the geezer, "Aiee Aiee 'e's 'ittin me". The copper pulled 'im over, got 'old of Biggo and 'e looked at the bloke and 'e started laughing. 'E carted Biggo out and then Jim went. I mean Jim never 'it a flea in 'is life, 'e's just got pulled out because 'e was behind Biggo. So Jim went. Then they sort of got a squad in, the Z Cars come in between 'em, like to separate us.'

'Then the Leeds all started 'ollerin "if you're all going to the station clap your 'ands". We all clapped our 'ands.'

'After we got outside and me, Bob, Ted and Alec walked down the road. Bob was in 'is, what's it, 'ad 'is broken foot. That's right 'e 'ad a broken foot. 'E 'ad 'is crutches. We was walking down the road, and all of a sudden we 'eard a big roar of "LEEDS" and all you could hear was this little roar of "Tottenham, Tottenham". We walked round the corner, we thought

we would get 'old of some of 'em, we get 'old of about two of 'em – beat 'em up. Get our own back. Then all of a sudden Ted started running across the grass and there was all Leeds supporters running at 'im. I thought, "What is the matter with that geezer?"'

'Leeds all started running past, they was running from Tottenham. Bob was standing there with 'es crutches, swinging them about and knocking everyone all over the show. Then we walked down the road a bit, they all ran. There was Western standing there with a brick, just sort of like smashing it into a geezer's face. Then every time we come to a turning we see the Leeds supporters, and Bob and 'is crutches run at 'em on 'es own and they all dispersed. Funny that.'

'They never stopped running at all, did they? Every time we think "right, they 'ave run" and we 'ave walked back, they 'ave come at us again, and we would run at 'em again. Then Western 'as literally picked the brick up and this geezer is running and 'as tripped over. Western 'as gone bang right on 'is face, THE BRICK. 'Is face it was just a state wasn't it? Then the coppers come up and got 'old of 'im and Western says "I never done it, I never done it. Honest, it wasn't me." In the end the coppers nicked 'im. Then the police 'ave ushered us back to the coach. They ushered us to the station and we got on the coach, this was an hour early, an hour early! First we went round the copper station to see if we could bail Western out, but they wouldn't 'ave none of it. Then we 'ad a police escort, a green car with coppers in it and two motor bikes behind that. We eventually got out of Leeds and we 'ave stopped at a 'alfway 'ouse. We 'ad something to eat. Then some Manchester United coach was there so we went over and beat 'em up. Then we went back to the coach and Catto, 'e started the coach and started driving it. The driver run out and shouted, "You're going the wrong way". Alex 'e was 'alf asleep and 'e was walking about the coach, 'e fell and caught the top of a window and the window cracked. We all got back in the coach and we 'ad a whip round for the driver.'

'In the end we got a bill didn't we. We got a bill for damages and tickets and what not, about £29, for the window and the roof and that.'

It would be true to say that few of the organized trips to away matches actually involved less expense or less trouble. On one trip to Derby by van, the vehicle broke down several times on the way and apart from three of the passengers who got out and hitch hiked no one actually got to the match on time. The van eventually gave up completely on the way back. Trips to more local matches and evening matches in London were far more successful. Trips to away matches were an excuse for 'a good day out' and nearly always involved a lot of drinking.

'What about the time when Pricey met us up in Coventry, we was as pissed as arse-'oles. Fucking four of us in there, fucking, the money we 'ad that day and the drink we knocked back that day.'

This would not only be common to the Collinwood when they went to away matches, but to many supporters when they are away from home.

'They are way from 'ome, they come down to London and they bring loads of money, they think "well we'll 'ave a good time". As soon as they get down 'ere they are in the pub, in the betting shops. They come out pissed, they go into the game pissed. They don't know what they are doing 'alf the time. They get nicked, they go out afterwards. That's what 'appens all the time.'

'Go down there, get pissed and come back.'

At the football matches and the activities surrounding football, there is constant contact with the police who have the problem of protecting the mobs from each other.

'You found that the coppers protected them more than they protected the Londoner, whereas when you go North it is the other way round like, they always protect their own teams.'

'The police are real bastards, in away matches it is really bad.'

'That copper 'e got 'old of Ted when 'e was sitting on the bar and gave 'im a right 'ander, blacked 'is eye and everything. Mind you Ted you don't know ... 'e's a right fucking lunatic. 'E'd probably get 'old of the copper and chuck 'im against a brick wall or something like. 'E says all that 'e was doing was sitting on the bar. 'E was sitting on the bar. The copper took 'im away and then when 'e come out like 'e 'ad a big black eye. Mind you Ted is a big boy, so ...'

'What makes me sick though, is when someone like Knuckler every week like 'e gets pulled out, 'e gets dragged round the pitch and 'e shouts "Tottenham" and 'e don't get nicked 'alf the time.'

'Down Tottenham especially, you get coppers, you know who they are, they are in plain clothes every week, they are in the same place every week, and they pick out geezers, who ain't done fuck all you know. You see 'em they pull kids out an' they 'ave done nothing.'

'And villains like Knuckler get away with it every week.'

'They 'it kids for nothing, then they might try to protect their selves and cover their faces up. Put their arms up and so the ol' Bill are on 'em. They jump 'em, they take 'em away and beat 'em up.'

Armstrong describes what happened to him when he got pulled out of the Tottenham crowd for fighting.

'When I was down there once there was a fight and that. I was fighting somebody and a copper starts putting 'is arm on me shoulder. So I swung round like and 'e said "Police". 'E was in plain clothes so I didn't believe 'im at first you know, so started struggling a bit so 'e pushed me arm up me back. This gap opened up in the crowd. Ginger was there and someone else and they says "Come on, that geezer's got Armstrong, come we'll jump 'im." So I says "Leave it out 'e's police, leave 'im alone." So anyway 'e says, "You gonna come quietly like?" So I says "Yes all right I ain't done nothing". 'E took me out, dragged me out the back. They took me to a little 'ut, a special 'ut which is a police 'ut. They take you round under the ground and down this long narrow alleyway. They take you down there and 'e was big, a really big copper. As 'e is taking me down there 'e's trying to smash me 'ead on the wall, for no reason at all, you know. Just trying to smash me 'ead, I was just bracing myself, so 'e wouldn't do it. So 'e says, "What we got 'ere another tough guy?" I says "Well, you ain't gonna smash my 'ead against the wall, I ain't done fuck all." So 'e took me in the 'ut and next thing 'e drags somebody else in. So they says "We are nicking you for fighting each other." So I says "What? How can you nick me? 'E's a mate I know 'im." I didn't know 'im to talk to I just know 'im to look at, I see 'im down there a time or two. I says "How can you nick me, 'e's me mate?" They says "O'er we are nicking you two for

fighting two other people we ain't got 'em but we know who they are." They says, "You been nicked before", I says "No." They took me name and looked in their books to see if I 'ad, and I never. So they took me out and put me in the van, and there was a load of us in the van. One of 'em tried to 'it me on the way to the station. When we get there they took us inside and just sat us down. Then 'e says "Right, all those over seventeen stand up." Well I was only sixteen but I looked a bit older so 'e says "ain't you over seventeen?" I say "No". They said "This is another juvenile" I says "What is that supposed to mean? Are you going to let me go?" They says "No". So then they put me in this cell with this bloke I was supposed to be fighting with. Me ol' man come an took me out.

'A few weeks later I went to court, we could 'ave got off in court even, but it was the other bloke I was with, he was stupid. I said "I never 'it nobody". 'E said 'e swung out but 'e didn't know whether 'e 'it 'em or not. That was what done it. I got a fine.

'After that I used to see the copper down at the Park Lane right, the one who nicked me, 'e'd say to me, them blokes you're with, I've seen 'em up 'ere before, keep away from 'em. They will get you into trouble, people know you by your friends." I said, "I'll go with who I want, and they're me friends." So 'e says, "Don't be saucy, keep away from the bars, 'cause I know you're under age. If I see you in the bars, I will nick yer. If I see yer pushing anyone I will nick yer, if I see you standing out I will nick yer." He was in uniform this time and 'e said to another copper, "Keep your eye on 'im". So you could say that was persecution.'

One of the problems which becomes evident from this story is that the police act, when they have witnessed an illegal act being committed, such as Armstrong fighting with another youth in the crowd. As far as Armstrong was concerned this was not a very serious happening, and perhaps nothing out of the ordinary. Therefore Armstrong sees no reason for police intervention, and resents it. He also feels that the police officer by virtue of his authority uses violence against him to stop him from using violence. Perhaps Armstrong senses an apparent contradiction.

10 Police

It is within the mob itself that the members of the gang have most of their contact with the police. This occurs at pubs or dance halls, clubs, trips to Southend and football. The police are nearly always called in to control their behaviour and thus restrict their opportunities for 'fun and excitement', though the mere contact with the police may in itself produce the excitement. Due to this constant contact with the police as the force which contains their activities, it is inevitable that the gang develops a great animosity towards the police and they make all sorts of allegations about police activities.

'Southend are meant to be the brightest police squad in Great Britain, so they say. They are brilliant, so they say, most efficient. That's only because they're nasty like. What about the coppers at Stoke [football ground]? There was a bloke at the back, they would grab 'old of 'im from there and throw 'im down a load of stairs; a couple would take 'im from there and throw 'im down a load more; another couple would throw 'im through the entrance, give 'im a good 'iding and kick 'im out of the ground and then if 'e came back and did it again, they would get 'im again. The copper wouldn't 'ave to move, he'd just grab 'im and throw 'im to the next one down the stairs. They never nicked anyone and yet they didn't do it to none of the Londoners ... where if ya go to Derby, West Brom or somewhere like that, they pick on the Londoners.'

'What about when we went to Bradford? The kids had choppers and I said "you dirty fuckers" and they threw me out 'cause I was swearing and there was this kid waving an axe in the air and I said "what about 'im" and they took no notice.'

'What about in Manchester? When two dirty great coppers and them saying "come on you London bastards, I've had

enough of you now". The same thing happened to me this season. A dirty great big mongrel they had, nearly bit me ass. I said "you bastards" ... the copper grabbed hold of me and the other one punched me in the stomach and he said, "you cockney bastard".'

'At Crystal Palace they chucked us all in the train and they 'ad dogs and we was all going "woof, woof". The copper says the next one who does that I will set 'im on you. Ron goes woof ... the cop grabs 'im out and chases 'im down the corridor with the dog.'

'The London police 'ave a go at us and not at the Northerners. We are supposed to be the bullies. The police around Spurs hate Tottenham.'

'What about the time we was pushing, they nicked me for pushing - how can they nick you for pushing ... stupid, stupid. ... Five thousand people can't leave the ground without pushing ... because you're falling on someone you're nicked.'

'Ya know when you're doing "Knees Up Mother Brown" and you're in the middle, ya 'ave no choice you 'ave to jump up and down. Well the police just stand there, just grabbing people out, going "nicked, nicked".'

'If you sing "Harry Roberts is our mate, is our mate, is our mate, Harry Roberts is our mate, he kills coppers", the police don't like it.'

Because they were in constant contact with the police the gang members developed an image and opinion of the police, especially in their function with crowd control.

'The police enjoy it - it is their afternoon out. They are like skinheads, they like knocking people about. They only join to knock people about. They join a mob, only it is a legal mob. 'Alf of 'em was like the little snidey kid at school, who can't say fuck all and grasses 'em up but when he joins them, has a right to march up and down. It's like a private army.'

'I don't think that they are absolute bastards, I mean they are not absolutely villainous. I mean we weren't absolutely fucking angels in them days, was we. They were a bit out of 'and, but we weren't sort of like, God's gift to the earth.'

'I suppose, now I can sympathize with them a bit because

when I think back to what we was like and what they must 'ave 'ad to put up with. Although you call 'em bastards and all this and that, at the time.'

'Oh they are, there is no doubt about it, they are bastards.'

'The trouble they got you out of, by being there.'

'What, coppers?'

'Being there, when other supporters 'ave come.'

'No, I wouldn't give a fucking penny to a copper, if 'e was blind - I just 'ate coppers.'

'Yer but if they didn't give you a 'iding now and again you would 'ave taken liberties so strong that it wouldn't 'ave been worth their while being there, and they would miss a free game.'

'How many times do you go into court and the judge takes your word against the copper?'

'You know when I was in court the second time, there was two coppers there. They 'ad to give their account of what 'appened at the time. They lied and twisted it all round. We gave our account, we told 'em what 'appened although we lied a bit. But everything that they said was against us. They never said one word, not that would 'ave 'elped us but would. . . . You could see that they really wanted to get us nicked, that was what they wanted. They was bending it all, they was lying about what 'appened. But if you tell a magistrate, or whatever it is, that the police are lying, they are going to call you a bigger liar than what you are. What's it matter if you lie, they are going to believe them rather than you in the first place.'

The mob believes that 'the coppers are always right', and that the courts will always support the police word against theirs. This only frustrates and antagonizes the gang when they believe that the police are abusing the courts, and this only helps to endorse their beliefs that the courts themselves are biased against their type of people.

SHOW HIPPIES AND SKINHEADS THE BIRCH SAYS SEATON. . . . Show the birch to a hippy or a skinhead and you have shown him the light and the way back to respect for himself and the law, Judge Reginald Ethelbert Seaton said yesterday, retiring after ten years as chairman of the London Sessions.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1969, p. 4.

'The first time that I went to court was with Marty and that. We went down there, to this Calley Street bit and 'ad a fight. Well, I didn't, I was sitting on the wall, laughing and this copper comes up and says "you're nicked" and I said "what for?" . . . clink, in the back of a meat wagon, I was nicked for fighting and I said I weren't and we had three witnesses, me and this Marty. We was both sitting there laughing, 'cause there was so many with us, that we was killing them anyway. In court the schoolkeeper at the school, this was while we was at school by the way, said about us "them two boys wasn't fighting". We still got fined ten bob.'

'Didcha 'ear about Eddie? 'E got nicked for kicking a copper and the copper who 'e kicked was not the one in the court to witness that "this boy kicked me and give me this bruise". It was a different copper and they still said that's the one and Eddie got three months detention. He couldn't say nothing cause they wouldn't believe 'im. 'Is mother went up; she knew it wasn't the same one but what could she say? She just said how good her son was. The judge said "yes, your son is a nice boy but he likes kicking police officers and people of importance and making a nuisance of himself".'

'Police . . . they don't half get the needle if you won't agree with them. Most of 'em tell you what you done before they take your statement. Like when I was pulled in for nicking out of the back of a shop with me brother, they told us what we done before we done it. "You went along and climbed on a roof, you got the axe saw out and sawed the bars away and got in and nicked the stuff." But what happened was that me and me brother had sawed them away the week before 'cause the bloke was on holiday. They (the police) told us we took the axe saws with us and done it. You get some decent coppers like and some bad ones.'

Members of the mob had very mixed opinions about punishment and crime. Some thought that punishment is essential to control people's 'bad behaviour', while others had grave doubts about the value and end result of the punishment itself.

'You've got to 'ave authority, 'aven't you? You've got to 'ave police or everyone would be killing each other.'

'It could start crime though, couldn't it? They only do it

because it is more of a challenge. Rebellion. You can't tell me that those people down Chutlers who nick two bob do it for the money, it's a challenge isn't it?'

'Without police there would be crime but not such petty crime. There wouldn't be vandalism, that is just done to rebel against authority.'

A local police inspector, who works with the juvenile board, believes that no child under fifteen years should appear before a court because he saw this as being detrimental to their well-being. They should instead be helped by directing them towards clubs and other creative activities.

'Yeah, but then they (the authorities) go and close down clubs, that's a contradiction, i'n't it?'

'Yeah, but if kids get away with somethin' one time and then they get away with it again 'cause they're let off, you could punish them say the second or third time.'

'I believe in punishment, if the punishment fits the crime. If you was on probation, for instance, you would be a bit more careful about going to court. Or if you was on a year's conditional discharge ... well, I don't know if it would stop yer but you would make sure you didn't get caught ... you wouldn't go out of yer way to do anything.'

'When they take you to court, they're trying to scare you. If you've been to court, it gives you a bad name don't it? It's just to punish yer.'

'Yeah, you're being punished for your past crimes, not for your future crimes.'

'They mark you for your life when you're a criminal by your record, like you can't get a job when you come out of nick.'

'You've got to be punished for what you do, 'aven't you? Pats on the 'ead won't do it at that age, will it?'

'What is punishment for? Does 'anging 'elp you? Does a life sentence 'elp you? It don't 'elp society 'cause they're paying fourteen to fifteen pounds a week to keep you there.'

'The whole idea of it is to punish. ... "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime" ... it's get 'im out of the way so he can't do it again. They 'ad the right idea when they sent 'em all to Australia.'

'With some people punishment works.'

'If I got punished at school it just made me not do it if the same teacher was around. If I forgot my books, right, and the teacher caned me, I wouldn't forget me books with that teacher again. If you are punished when you are in the wrong and by someone you respect, it might do you good, make you think, but otherwise. ... The law punishes the people in society and it don't do any good.'

'It does do you some good.'

'If children under fifteen are fined, it is punishing their parents, taking 'em to court is punishing their parents. They think it is going to make the parents 'it the child.'

'If the police just beat you up in the back of a van, instead of taking you to court and getting a thirty-pound fine, it would be better.'

'I dunno, what they could do to you in the back of a van and the damage they could do.'

'Older people, people who can pay money out of their own pockets, fining them is punishing them, but little kids. I think to punish them you've got to smack 'em.'

'You can't smack fourteen and fifteen year olds caning them, whipping them - will make them rebel. They hate the people who do it to 'em so they want to get back at them, don't they.'

'No, but if you get 'it, it ain't an everlasting punishment. The punishing is to make an example to other people, to stop you doing the crime again. You say "I won't do it again, or I'll get 'urt again." It stops enough people, don't it? The idea is, "if you put your 'and in the fire, you won't do it again" ... but then there's the eleventh commandment: NEVER GET CAUGHT.'

'Stealing is for gain; killing is for hatred; vandalism is for action - and if they let the football supporters fight, it would save their trains, wouldn't it?'

'If they have one section of the football ground within which to fight.'

'No - but people would kill each other.'

'Yeah, but that would be because they want to kill each other, they wouldn't want to go up there unless they wanted to kill each other.'

'If they 'ave a fighting end and all through the game they are

going bop ... bop ... bop and they are all falling down, at the end of the game they ain't gonna stop and all walk out of the game, they are gonna carry on and when the police push 'em out of the grounds and when they get outside, some bloke will get a right 'ander 'as he is walking past and 'e will join in and soon everyone would join in.'

'Wouldn't they get bored after they 'ad been fighting for ninety minutes?'

'They would be dead, more like it.'

'Well if you set an example with five thousand football supporters, the other millions might learn.'

'I tell you 'alf of 'em wouldn't go in there if there wasn't any police to stop 'em.'

'I wouldn't think "Let's go over to football and 'ave a fight for ninety minutes and get killed." Half of 'em only go to spit at the police and 'ave the police throw 'em out ... everyone looking at 'em and all the papers snapping cameras.'

Letters from John and Jamie

The following are letters from John and Jamie, written to us during the year and a half that we have been engaged in putting this book together.

10 October 1970

'... the everlasting, never-ending, continuing story of Jerry and Skip is over. Skip is courting another bird and Jerry is looking for another idiot.

'With that, the headlines, over I can say that we will help with the book, John and I that is, but I don't know who else would be interested, except Knuckler who could tell the world how hard he is.

'I went to a party last week with Pricey, O'Brien and Potter over Wembley Park, you know all the upper-class chaps were there. They were selling their house and going off to university. They were all trying to be trendy and as I expected all for the working class and equality, not hippies though. I was getting along well with one. He told me that he had worked in the East End and came out with all the old "we've had it rough, haven't we", trying to put himself into a working-class background.

'I got fed up with being on their side after a while and when I called a coloured girl a black girl, they immediately turned and said I was prejudiced. So not wanting to displease them I agreed and shocked them all by saying I used to roll Pakis. They said I must be sick in the head. I told them it was quite common at the time. So I was not a nice fellow any more but had a great argument which lasted until four o'clock next morning. I ended up asleep with the others and I suppose they were quite nice people really. We are going to a party tonight on top of the Salmon and Ball or rather we are having a party and Higgins is pawning

his ring to go and pay the whip. Special watch must be observed for the dodgers, alias Irish people.

'I reckon that if you do publish a book, after meeting the mob last week, it could sell over Wembley Park at least. Only thing is with all these people like coppers and etc., there'll be more pages of authors' names, than there will be of the book itself.

'All the others are getting along fine. . . . Fred is out of work but off the pills. Ted's back and forth from pills to Anna. Pricey's getting fat. Harper and Briggs are the only hippies left. Potter has been banished from their society. Griling and Micky Slate still go over the water to Bermondsey but we'll all be together again tonight, except for Harper and Briggs who are skint.'

Jamie

29 March 1971

'Not much happening down here really. Dave's officially engaged, Alex Potter has moved to Becontree so we won't see him again. They all paid up their fines for smashing up the school. Knuckler has had another couple of nickings and is due to appear in the near future for fighting (for a change) with seven blokes in a Tottenham pub one night. The last time he was due to appear we all bid him good-bye and he had his last night in which he obliged us to buy him drinks. But of course he got a fine up in Carlisle because they knew nothing about him.

'John, Ted and Joey are going to the sessions in June for assaulting PC and stealing sixty-four copies of the *East London Advertiser*. But of course it has to be dramatized. They came along Bethnal Green Road drunk one night and kicked the newspapers and Joey picked them up and ran along play acting like a fool. PC Mervin who the week before was assaulted by a twenty-year-old woman and has his own column in the *East London* . . . so he approached them on his scooter and grabbed Joey's arm. They thought he was a busybody so Joey hit him but the PC had expected this because following him were two panda cars.

'Anyway the police told his mum that John did PC a lot of damage but it seems it was Ted who was going mad and doing it

all. The only thing is that the PC has not a mark on him because his helmet protected him and somehow Ted gained a black eye at the station and Joey broke or fractured a bone in his hand. Still it was a silly thing to do and they all have been stated as sober by the police. They would take no notice of John's Mum's plea of drunken disorder, although they obviously were. They have been to court and pleaded innocent to Tobias Springer and they go to sessions and by looking at the police statements John's dad received, it looks like Richardson's torture trial stating other youths also involved who escaped.

'I wouldn't mind going to Nottingham but we don't all see each other as we used to. John goes with Micky Blake and others unknown to you. I go with Cookie, Guinane and Johnson mostly but I just see Parrish, O'Brien, Sawyer, Cocker, Barber and some of the Irish when I go down the Crown on Thursdays. As it gets warmer and as Easter is coming up they may want to go away and I'll suggest your place to them . . .

'Incidentally John has given up going to football and plays for a church team instead. He'll soon be preaching the gospel while backing a horse in the betting office.

'If you ever come to London we would be impossible to find and I sometimes wish I were younger. Before I could go out every night on the streets, whereas now I sit in or play darts at the Carpenters on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. And then start living it up on Thursday, usually ending up skint after Sunday or sometimes even Saturday. It all seems a waste of time to me but everyone is the same and I suppose you just hang about until you put out to stud.'

From Orson Welles

'I hope things are going all right out in the sticks. Since I last saw you I have been nicked with Joey and Ted and have been to court three times and we have got to go to sessions for trial. But since then things are going better. I have got myself into a football team and Whitsun I am going abroad for the first time to play football for this football team. Now I'll tell you about the others. Knuckler has got nicked and been fined a fiver. Ted is still the same half junkie and half crank. Bob has turned bent.

All the others are all right . . . by the way I was seventeen Easter Sunday and feeling it. Jamie and some of the others were thinking of coming and see you Whitsun, so maybe you can write and tell them whether you had any other plans. . . .

yours, DOG, John.

P.S. Please excuse the writing, I haven't done it for years.'

18 October 1971

'You may be pleased to hear that John, Ted and Joey got acquitted at the Inner London Sessions today. The case went from ten thirty to four o'clock and it seems after the jury had been out a couple of times they were found innocent. It seems there was a loophole about the police roughing them first, and the main thing was the obscurity of stealing newspapers and then resisting arrest by assault. Maybe if the police had concentrated more on hooliganism the verdict would have been different, what with the paper talk of thugs attacking poor innocent policemen and prison officers. Anyway the police are not satisfied with some more potential Fred Sewells being let loose, so they are going to try and take it further, so I hear. I would put it down to Ted's unbelievable luck and his shrewd father, who I have seen arrange things twice before, although I was not there today. Ted appeared with his eye bandaged up after crashing the van last night. I feel sorry for his dad, he broke down and cried today.

'I have been told by Pricey and Sinclair on a few occasions that they will come to Notts but I cannot get it going. We arrange at the beginning of the week and by pay day we are in separate places with different people or the money's gone . . .

'The only way to immediately progress with the book is by mail, although it isn't really good enough. I don't think you have enough escapades of gangland outings or the strange way we felt about different things. You need to attract more attention. The sort of people we are aiming at will say "oh another group of radical idealists putting in the same old toffee". The people who read it will be these Marxists students and such who will contact us to join them in their fight against the establishment. The only thing is to be different so that they look at it in

horror, I think (radicals included), and then go and put some of your own theories and studies in so that they in the end begin to understand the problems of class and environment. The book, so far in present form, will definitely, in my view, get this point over but I am talking about how are you going to get people to buy it just by looking at the cover or by reading the first few lines while browsing around in a bookstall. A picture of us all in the nude might do the trick of shocking people but the only other way is say the way we looked upon rolling Pakis – the thought of utter discrimination and attack without hardly any reason shocks students, especially as they are all called "chairman maos" or so they think. I tried this out at a party in Wembley Park. The students, all spoilt do-gooders, were appalled even when I tried to explain that I never really hit any. I was an absolute animal to have even witnessed it. One said there were more coloured people in Wembley than in Stepney and that they were all happy together. By the way the party was for the selling of their house (the party givers). Even if this is true, it's like John Wayne living next door to Sidney Poitier in Hollywood. I don't suppose the Wayne family would be talking about "dem wogs next door", seeing as though both parties had all they required. By the way I saw a programme the other day, an interview with Bernadette Devlin . . . I was wrong about her except for her thinking that all Irish shot are innocent and demanding inquiries and the release of internees. If eighty of them are proven IRA officers they cannot be released to shoot our own soldiers. Even if you sympathize with the ordinary people, how can you with an organization which is more fascist than our own government and who show no consideration for the lives of their own people when they blow buildings? I think they are out to feather their own nests by assuring power to themselves – they will take all the profits of a united Ireland and do the same as the Protestants. Conservative, look at what the Conservatives have done to them, and we will be no better off. The same as what would happen here if the Blacks or workers took over, unions would rule and as we know by now they are all corrupt.

'It looks as though we have no future with the Labour government taking the piss out of all its supporters by going against the Common Market, when we know they would have taken us

in. It seems as if Heath says white, Wilson says black and vice versa; we will have to have a coalition soon.

'The last chapter (five) was the best so far I think. The careers wanted of course are not known. Of course people don't even know what they want to do and with us only thinking of what we can gain we can't criticize the upper classes for exploiting us for what they can gain. If the unemployment continues up North I suppose they will all march down here and camp here while they get jobs. The Tories will be laughing what with ten men fighting for one job. The disturbing thing is that many up North just count all us in London as Tories because we are all better off than them and this could cause fighting and riots with a little bit of stirring up from Communists or Tories (the same difference).

'Anyway, good luck and don't lose your job, I hope to see you before the revolution.'

Jamie

6 December 1971

'The book seems to be getting better as far as I'm concerned, perhaps because you seem to be over the facts and figures of the earlier chapters and the quotes of other writers, etc. The only thing I don't like is all the thoughts or beliefs of the gang are what we used to feel. If I were asked now about football fights and club fights, I would feel embarrassed, to a stranger anyway. I don't want to sound like an old wizard but if we could meet us as of then, we would think what childish things to do! We are not as close as before but one thing I want to alter in the book is about racial integration. You say in chapter seven that people such as Jews, Negroes and Pakistanis are victims of a propaganda to protect the upper classes. But surely this is a separate hate. You don't have to think of the same people who are against you in the same way. It's like the rich people can hate each other although they are wealthy because one is of a different religion or culture. Also in the chapter is about the coloured boys not being attacked. Well, you forget that while we were a gang we did not hate them. Only after, through experiences with them and the splitting up of the gang, did we

begin to dislike them and they also dislike us. It was the fashion to hit Pakis but the kids who followed us about last year from Mile End and such, were beating up Negroes in the same way. You obviously never saw Tony in his Black Panther T-shirt, when he stopped seeing us. He got a pretty bad hiding by a bloke in the Black Boy pub over this. Also his fight with Ted when you were there was no accident, it was a planned thing that went off wrong. When he was to fight Olly it was stopped by the Irish and from then it was Skip, John, Olly and Ted all coming flash with him all the time before he picked Ted out.

'Anyway no Pakistani ever spoke to us nor we to him, so they were complete aliens to us in every way; it was just like a fox hunt to go out and hit one.

'I think that your case for colour equality is out now as all people who write for the papers are for them, all the papers are full of black girls in the nude. Their men are said to be more sophisticated lovers, their women more sexy. They were once the underdog but not any more. All this crap about Rhodesia not being ruled by its majority, do we rule ours? The rich rule Britain and it just happens that all rich Rhodesians are white. Well, you can work your way up so far but you can't be a ruler without money and how can you expect the rich to just give to the poor. It just isn't done, not anywhere, not ever.

'I am sorry about the racialism but you make our views sound like a passing phase, an inheritance on this subject. I do not agree. And when you say we fear the character of the East End changing, surely if people of another borough moving in make a difference, people from miles away of another world so to speak, turn it upside down.

'This is why the upper classes won't let the workers into the high places, because they are afraid we will pull down the houses of Parliament, sack the Queen and destroy all the old English traditions which is probably at least half true, what with all these communists leading the unions. I think in a geography book when showing people of all nations, Chinese should be yellow, Nigerians black and Europeans white. Your friends in the Bethnal Green bookshop think we should all be black. Black is beautiful, shit.'

Jamie

Conclusion: Pete and Susie

In the many months that it has taken to put these few pages together, the constant listening, typing and reading of the statements and conversations has forced us all to think a little more about our own ideas and we hope to understand a little better why the Collinwood developed in the way that it did.

Firstly, we need to recognize that the East End community is under great pressure, a tremendous social and physical change has taken place in the last generation. In the last generation the population has dropped by over 300,000, vast areas have been cleared and new flats built. Wilmott and Young pointed out the need for new development to be based around existing social and family structures, but as we have heard from Dennis and people living in the East End, the GLC has had housing as the first priority, not the communal cohesiveness. How much have these physical changes affected the East End people? Is the Cockney identity being altered or are the values adapting to the new environment?

'The fact is that they are proud of being what they are (the East Enders). The manners are atrocious, but they are not ashamed of it and they wouldn't want to be anything else. It's a funny kind of loyalty, ain't it? But that's a thing that, in the best part of the area, is now past and finished. I suppose it is a bit hard for them (the young) really, they have no identity in that sense, have they? I think flats tend to do this really, don't they? They have a word for it, don't they - skyscraper - not sure, it's something odd that says that skyscrapers are not good for people.'

Dennis goes on to talk about how so many Bethnal Green people have moved to Kent and Sussex and how their children will have no affiliation to Bethnal Green. 'So even there East London is sort of losing out again in that sense. Because they

do well for themselves, they earn money and, unlike the old East Londoner who used to spend most of it in the pub and making hisself look a good feller amongst his friends, the world today is far more material, people want to own their own things. People didn't want to own their own things in the thirties or even just after the war, nobody really wanted to own their own things, they wanted just a nice comfortable home. They didn't want the responsibility of owning a house, they would say "that's a millstone around your neck.... Let's buy a car.... Who wants a nice car, that's a millstone around your neck." No one wanted to have anything of their own, now they're different, they want to own everything.' Here Dennis points to some of the changes which he thinks have taken place. It is most likely that many people would disagree with him but it is his interpretation of the changes. We should say here that Dennis was not condemning people for wanting to own things, he owns a car himself and runs his own business, but rather he is sorry to see the social changes in the area.

What was the self image of the Collinwood gang when they were first together? It wasn't the image of 'skinhead' which was a term unknown at that time, but it was with the East End, with the cockney. They identified with their image of the 'cockney youth'. Perhaps they enacted the part projected by the adults, projected by stories of the past: the cockney barrow-boy folk hero. How accurate this image was in relation to the roles their parents played in their youth isn't known but with the community being disrupted and much of the cohesiveness of the social structure gone, much of the controlling influence of the community was also gone. It is therefore not surprising to find that the gang was essentially in isolation from the community.

It is not surprising either that when the gang analysed its position in society (chapter six) they demonstrated how strongly they believe that they are under pressure to conform with the established values of society. They singled out members of their own community to attack - children at school who were successful were referred to as dummoes because they believed that these children conformed, always did as they were told and didn't think for themselves. They saw these children as being on their

way out of the local culture and in the future to take establishment-type jobs – the future officials, police, etc. Also the attack on local people termed as traitors, East End people who have adopted values other than those that the gang believes to be the values of the East End. Their vicious attack on the middle class, and all that they associate with it, perhaps indicates the gang's fear that the middle class is a real threat and reference is made to local people who are becoming middle class, at least in attitudes.

We feel that the Collinwood recognized that the area was being changed, that the identity was being lost and that they were being threatened by this. They hadn't conformed at school, for all sorts of different reasons, and therefore had lost out on any of the possible opportunities that school 'success' might have brought them. They therefore have a real vested interest in seeing their 'cockney subculture' survive. It is on top of all these internal social changes that one must add the large immigrant communities that have moved into the East End. We would like to suggest that to the gang the immigrant communities are the visible threat of the social changes. They are 'symbolically' connected with the changes which were already taking place within the East End community. The West Indian, Indian and Pakistani communities have not caused these changes but it is very easy to point to them: 'Things were never like this before they came. . . . They're taking over the area.'

But let's look at the gang itself. Its most striking aspect was the conformity, only equalled by the council flats that they live in. The conformity of the uniform was a demonstration of the uniformity of the language, areas of discussion, interests, attitudes and actions. There is security in this sameness – individuality was a threat and could not be tolerated. Membership was based on the embracing of the conformity, termination of membership was achieved by non-conformity. This could be a difficult task if the member needed the approval of the other members, as the group pressures may be too strong to overcome. All the members of the gang were dependent on the gang, they were forced together due to their common experiences and common attitudes to the society at large. They gave each other the support that they did not receive from the community. The

gang itself was often referred to as a community and even by some on odd occasions as their family. In this way the gang supplied a very real service to the members when they were in need of a sense of belonging. An identity and the knowledge that they were wanted by other people.

The gang had no authority structure, or defined leadership. There were no rules as such, everything was controlled by group pressure – by which we mean that every person tries to be and tries to get the others to be and behave the same. It was a kind of effort to lose themselves so that they couldn't be got at. If you can conform then no one can jump on you for being different. As everyone in the group behaved the same, the individual members were safe, even if all the members of the gang didn't conform with the dominant rules of society. John said, after a few incidents had been described, 'We just ran away from them all'. We see this as a sense of being detached, a kind of ignoring the people outside of the gang and the physical and mental ability to escape from 'them all'. The approval of activities within the gang overrides the disapproval from outside.

The gang disappeared as a gang when the members no longer needed it. The friendships and relationships which were developed either continued or faded as interests took people apart. To all of the members the gang itself had obviously been an invaluable experience and it had supplied a security which otherwise was not forthcoming. Our society usually sees gang structures as a threat and reacts against them. They try to break them up and this only alienates the members of the gang still further. The gang is a social structure which is formed by its members because they need it, because it may be their only form of defence or survival, and therefore it is valuable. But the institutions of our society refuse to adapt. The schools blame the community, the family or the child if one's education is not 'successful'. Perhaps the school should take a look at itself – are the schools built for children or are children born for the schools? We asked the same question of the Youth Services. Mr Finch admitted that the Youth Services in East London do not cater for 'skinheads'. Mr Cox said that wherever working-class young people meet in any reasonable numbers, there is a need to have a large bouncer element to control them.

It is not little wonder that members of the Collinwood saw the youth service as an extension of school or as just another arm of authority. Youth clubs are so often passive and middle class in structure, with little or no relevance to the real life of the community.

The dominant culture controls all of the institutions and demands conformity to its values, ignoring the values of an individual community within it, ignoring their language and their local environment. This dominant culture often fails to recognize that its aspirations for the people may not be the people's aspirations for themselves. It was under this kind of influence that the skinhead gang developed, one of the products of our institutions. They learned from their total environment, the majority of which was controlled by someone else, by people outside of their own subculture.

Conclusion: The Gang

What we like when reading a book is seeing something in it and you think 'That's right, that's how it should be', well, not how it should be, but how it is. That's how we feel this book is. It will depend on what kind of people read it. If they are people a bit older than us say or the same age as us and they read it they will think back, 'That's how it was, that's right.' Nothing's been exaggerated.

For some people it will be an education, for some people it will be a shock. I think it is amusing and shocking. That is why we have had to have lots of stories in it. For working-class people it isn't going to be anything new; they are going to enjoy it.

This book will give a reason for what the kids today are doing. If you get a group of kids, as they are, younger, and they go round smashing up things and that, what the book is going to do is give them a reason why they do it. Most people don't know why they do it. If you say 'Why are you going round as a football hooligan?' they won't know why they are doing it, and we are saying to them 'because of class and all this lark'.

To tell the truth we are still in gang life now. If someone gets into trouble and people hear about it, everyone wants to know. Well, you take Miller, everyone wanted to know. He gets in trouble we all go and see him and see what's happening. We get sort of interested and want to help. We stick with each other. Yes, we are still in gang life now.

We were classed as skinheads, but by the time they started calling us skinheads we were beginning to, sort of, drop out of it. We were called pin heads and no heads and what heads. It all started when we used to go over Vicky Park.

What a lovely life we had then, you needed about a 'tanner' each to have a whip round for a boat and we would all be on the lake. That was all we needed. We used to go over get a boat,

rock the boat, sink the boat, all fall in. All get shit all over us. Walk into a laundromat, strip off. Put all our clothes in the spin dryer. Let them dry, put them on. All odd socks and someone else's . . . whatever. It was just great. In some ways you wish you was still doing it. When we started dressing like skinheads we started it, it wasn't an evil thing, it wasn't a bad thing. Because when we started it our mums said 'Oh lovely short hair', 'I've never seen you looking so nice'. Or they would say 'What 'ave you got your hair like that for?' 'Oh, I like it like this, it's better than like that, it's easy to manage, it's much smarter.' 'Oh, all right.' Then when you buy greens, jeans and boots, they realize that you are going through a phase and that you are going to do what your mates do.

As we are now, we can talk to our parents about what we used to do, we can say 'Well I used to go out and I done some bloke some night'. But then, you couldn't really say 'I went out to-night, mum, and I got this geezer and I kicked 'im in the 'ead, put the boot in and I put . . . and kicked 'im.' What would our mums have said? Now our fathers might ask if we have ever had a fight or if you can look after yourself. Well then you are going to tell them about what you have done and what has happened in the past. But if we had told them when we were fourteen or fifteen they would probably kicked us all around the house. Perhaps some of us would have been kicked out of home or would have had to leave.

Everyone did get on reasonably well with their parents. Although everyone had their rows it never really got to the point of being thrown out. Some of us were out of work a lot or changed jobs every other week and our fathers would have had goes about it and there would have been a row, 'What future is there in this or that?', they would say. Now you understand what they were talking about.

Our mothers used to think 'Well, they are youngsters, that's why they go out every night'. They didn't used to ask what we got up to. They cared but they never looked too deep.

Well, we would go home and have tea and then straight out with the mates. Your mother would say 'Where are you going?' and you would say 'Out.' When you come home, your mother would say 'Where have you been?' and you would say 'with me

mates'. Youngsters don't like to talk too much about things to their parents. Also when you are young you tell your parents so many lies. Of course they don't believe you, they know you are telling lies, but all the same they still ask you questions, just as if to say 'I am interested in where you are going'. The trouble was that nine times out of ten we would have been going somewhere, where they wouldn't have wanted us to go, or we would be doing something that they wouldn't have wanted us to do. So we would tell them a load of lies and they would go 'YER, YER, YER'. For example John would say he is going to make a phone call or something and instead he would go to Manchester or somewhere to watch football. So in the end your parents had to give up believing you.

With working-class families, you very rarely find that youngsters move away, leave their home. Unlike the middle-class families and hippies and people like that, they all leave home, they all leave eventually. They go to college and places like that and are living away from home. Maybe they are not as close to their parents, maybe they don't know their parents. But most probably it is because they can afford to leave home, we would all like to leave home at one time or another if we could afford it.

As skinheads, we had in a way left home, we still depended upon our families for food and a bed, we still lived at home, except for the one or two who now and again lived at the Paint House but if we were with our mates and they said 'Come 'ere do this', you wouldn't think about your mum and dad and if they would worry and all that. We didn't care about what our mothers and fathers had said. If they had told us to be in at a certain time and the gang turned round and said 'we are going up so and so and we won't be back till half past two', you would go with the gang. We wouldn't think about our parents, but of course when we got home we would think of all the lies under the sun to tell them.

When we look at all the fourteen and fifteen year olds walking about now we think 'Look at them silly cunts walking about like that', and of course we think to ourselves 'I wasn't like that'. Of course we were, you try and convince yourself that you wasn't but we were. Then we try to kid ourselves that we were at least a bit more sensible.

When you are walking down the road sometimes some little skinhead of fourteen or fifteen looks at you. They look at you as if they are going to smash your head in, you know. We think 'how stupid we must have been, because we used to do things like that'. If one of these youngsters started anything, we couldn't hit them, you would have to throw them on the floor or something. You think 'Well, that is what someone would have done to me when I was their age'.

When we were younger we used to walk along the road and just look at people, we would never look away until they looked away first. We would get in fights through just looking at people. If you are walking down a road and someone is looking at you, you think 'Who's that cunt looking at?' He is thinking the same thing. You are also thinking 'I am going to look at 'im longer than 'e is going to look at me, 'cause 'e is going to shit out, 'cause I'm better than 'im.' You are trying to impress yourself on how tough you are and all your mates if they are around.

Now of course when we are out and you may look at someone coming down the road and they look at you, normally you both look away and think nothing of it. But we all seem to have different reactions when a younger kid of say fifteen 'screws' you in the street, and sometimes we seem to have mixed reactions. You don't really know what to do, we know that if you just look away which is what you want to do the kid is going to think to himself about you 'e's a cunt'. Mostly of course we turn away and don't worry about it. Sometimes you turn away but are embarrassed, but you would be even more embarrassed if you continued looking at them and the little kid ended up kicking you or something. But sometimes it still does something to you, you realize that the kid is trying to prove something to you, you have accepted his challenge, in that situation you just can't look away. Maybe the best thing to do is just to smile, we can laugh at them, mainly because we were like them when we were their age. You have to laugh at them, the same as people laughed at us when we were fifteen.

When we were younger if we had walked out of the underground station, walked across the road and fallen flat on your face and everyone started laughing at you, you would have gone

'What the fucking hell you laughing at?' but now you would see the joke. Now we can laugh at ourselves.

When we think about it now at the Collinwood it was us sitting around on the street, or in the youth club which was only two minutes away. Then we went to the mission; the mission played a very big part. We used to go round there in the beginning and take the piss out of the vicar so much that it was just unbelievable. When we went round there the vicar would say 'Right say your prayers, or you are not going to play billiards'. So we would all sit down and we would have the biggest laughs you can imagine. He would then give us a cup of coffee. Then someone would ask for a circumcized spoon or a Koshered drop of milk. There was a tuck shop and after a while John got promoted to look after it and sell the sweets and things. It was really a laugh when Dave had stuffed about nineteen Mars Bars in his pockets and ran out. The vicar saw him and caught him and then really preached at him, telling Dave how he had sinned and all that. So in the end Dave told him 'all right I will be converted'. So Dave went to a room with the vicar. The vicar preaches and does all these signs over Dave, like a Muslim or something. It was really kind of original. He was converting him and praying for him. John seeing the key in the lock, he locked Dave and the vicar in the room and hid the key in the pocket of the snooker table. The vicar said, 'Someone has locked the door but don't worry I shall teach you some more until they open the door again.' But Dave was being driven mad, so he threw the window open and was shouting 'Help, help'. In the end someone found the key and let them out.

Some people were a little scared of the mission, just in case they got converted. But most people considered it a joke. They told us so many things like women being evil and silly things that they lost out on themselves. Because of these silly stories and ideas that the churches and the mission taught they have lost out on all the people that they would have converted. The mission was more of a joke than anything.

Then there was the Paint House, it was just another club, that was what made us go up there, we didn't know that it was anything special. We went round to the other clubs and the

Paint House was just one of them. We used to go to all the clubs to have a fight. We thought the Paint House was going to be the same. We went there the same as we went to the Morpeth Club, St Hilda's, the Seabright, the Webb or the Repton and any club where we thought that we could have a riot. But we stuck at the Paint House for the simple reason that it was different. It was new for us, it was free, it was easy. You couldn't get nicked, nothing could happen to you. The Paint House had nothing compared to other clubs that we could have gone to. You go to other clubs, play billiards and all sorts of other games. There was nothing like that at the Paint House, but there weren't any ties either. We were a bit free there, we had a bit of room to breathe and we could do what we wanted to. Who was the youth leader? Well Peter was the so-called leader in the sense that we were looking at it then. But he wasn't a youth leader. In these other clubs which are new and full of good furniture and equipment the youth leader has all rules like you can do this or that and not other things and there are times for everything. The Paint House wasn't like that, it was old and had very little in it. There were no rules and no times.

We used to go up to the Paint House at one o'clock in the morning, we used it when we wanted and it was how we liked to relax. It was a second home for us, it was what you could call a second home. If we thought to ourselves, I don't fancy going to school today now what can I do, I can go up the Paint House and there is bound to be someone up there, or there is bound to be something to do up there. There is going to be something better than school. Maybe that day you had a teacher or a lesson that you didn't like and so you could always go up there. The same was for people who had just started work, perhaps they didn't fancy going into work, or maybe they were out of a job for a while, they would think, I can go up the Paint House, great. Perhaps some people worked locally they would nip up there in their dinner hour and have a chat.

Well, you know that when we went to the Paint House that we started painting it up, that was how it got its name, and we done the place out. Why do you reckon we did that? Do you think that it was the place that was changing us, because of the

state it was in. It was changing us. Or were we changing it? Or were we changing anyway and that was why we decided to do it up? We would normally go to places and wreck them and not worry about it, but at the Paint House we started painting it and we had plans. Yes, we did wreck the place first, but after that we started putting it together. Do you think that it was the place that started changing us?

We were influenced by what Peter said, he described what the place could be and we imagined 'Well it could be like that if we put our mind to it.' That's perhaps what we mean by the place changing us.

We all imagined for ourselves what the place could be like, we had our own dream if you like of the sorts of things we would like, a fitted carpet there, a settee there, a colour TV over there and two birds sitting on either side of me. Some of us of course were more realistic in our plans: 'I imagined everything that I wanted, first I wanted to decorate just because I liked decorating, then I thought don't decorate the top hall. I love football so, bump, football in the top hall. Well, then I thought downstairs we have got to have something for everyone - records, dancing, darts and table tennis and games and all sorts of things.'

Not everyone had such definite plans and while the decorating was going on there were still some of us who would chop up chairs. It may be that we could still be influenced at that time by other people and each other to smash things up. Also if someone smashed something we would think to ourselves 'If I say "don't smash it" I'm going to look an idiot.' We never had people to say "Well, leave it alone and let's paint the walls or build something." Also of course it was much easier to break than build.

When we were at the Paint House we were all working for each other, normally we wouldn't have bothered. We would normally have let someone else carry something or do a job, but there we used to go over to old sites and collect things, wood and anything that we could use. We did that because we were interested and the jobs like that were interesting. When it came to things that were uninteresting, not adventurous, a lot of us got scared of work, where now we wouldn't.

The other way of looking at this problem is that we all did

what we wanted to do, like maybe paint a bit of wall with one colour then paint another bit another colour.

Some of us would want to get on with the job and perhaps more of us wouldn't want to and so it wouldn't get done because there wasn't enough help. Maybe we should have got everyone in the mood. This may have been a failure of Pete's because he seldom got people in the mood. He never said, in the evening when people came in and were sitting around 'Now if we get this done by tomorrow and get that bit by then we can go on a coach trip.' That might have given us something to work for, but would we have thought 'Oh, Pete's dreaming'? But most of all you have got to want to do the job yourself in the first place, and do it for yourself. Sometimes of course when we had been working late we would have a fish and chips and beer afterwards, that was great.

We all used the Paint House as much as we could and as much as we wanted and in our own way, everyone thinks that. Perhaps we would run it differently now, maybe we were a bit young to get the best out of it, if we had a place like that now we would be well away. Well in many ways we don't need it now, we don't get in the kind of trouble that we did, we don't need places to sleep because we are seldom in a state that we can't go home. We are all interested in different things now and have less free time, but it would be good to have somewhere and something to do instead of watching the box.

There won't be another Paint House, there can't be, because the Paint House was unique. The Paint House was made by the people in it, by all the people who came there, and so that can't be repeated. But young people have got to have the choice between the normal clubs and doing something for themselves. No one can build up a Paint-House type place, it just happens. You can't say to people 'We are going to build a place, there is going to be nothing in there, you can come along and do what you want and make it into what you want to make it.' You can't say that and expect it to work, it has to be in their mind before they actually do it. They won't take it seriously. If you say to any group 'I am not going to do anything to you, no matter what you do here' the first thing they are likely to do is smash the place up. Then afterwards they may do the place up again or

they may go somewhere else. Nothing will happen just by itself, they must begin to see ideas in their own mind about building a club or a community and if they can contribute to the building of that they will appreciate the place more.

The writing and working on this book has been terrific value. We have all surely learnt something from writing it. Half the time it has been just talking about old times. We realize that some of our ideas have changed from when we took part in the activities that have been described in the book and maybe we haven't described things in the same way as we would have at the time. We would perhaps have made the Hyde Park incident into a bit of a joke if we had been talking about it at the time. Now, you realize that it is a serious thing to take someone's life, but then you didn't think it was taking a life, you thought that it was a Paki and that didn't matter.

Some of us would think that some of the things that we did were disgusting, things that we just wouldn't dream of doing now, things that would be too embarrassing. But all of us are glad in a way that it happened. It is good to look back at all the things that happened, even though we might not do the same thing again. It was all the different people that made it what it was. We had so many characters, who are just brilliant and great to be with. We could never get exactly the same again. But most of all we have all learned a lot from it. That's why it is great to get the same people together and hear their opinions now.

Also this book isn't only about a gang of skinheads, their activities and opinions, in fact the idea of skinheads is almost irrelevant to what happened to us and the attitudes that we have. This book is really about the class structure in this country today. We believe, know, that there is still a big gap between the rich and the poor. This is the root of the structure of our society, it is the root of all the crime and other problems. People don't nick and do all these sorts of things for fun, there are always reasons.

The class gap is responsible for the world we live in. Everything is built around people exploiting other people. Without class differences and exploitation, the world would be very different, it must be different.

The upper classes control everything, because they control the money and power. They control the newspapers, the culture, the industry, education, housing, everything. To be heard you have to use their language and words. To achieve anything you have to have money or get their education or both. When you get education and money you join them, join the upper class. Instead of joining them and using their language people should help their own class. Help them to express themselves and develop their own culture. There needs to be a kind of working class academy or something where you learn to express yourself the way you see things and not the way the people who control society see things. An academy where we can develop our own culture.

We need to change society. Change frightens people, and people. Not only the upper classes but our parents and us too. Change means revolution. People, even those who write and talk about revolution, think it means smashing everything up, bombing and shooting and killing people. They don't hear when you talk about a peaceful revolution, they still imagine bombs and things. They don't realize that we don't want to harm them as people but change the way we live. Most of the people who talk about revolution, think of themselves as leaders and they want to take over after the revolution and replace the people who control us now. Instead of believing in equality they believe in power.

It is through equality that we get rid of class and exploitation.